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**LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE:  
A CASE STUDY OF SIGNS IN MAJOR TRANSPORT HUBS  
IN THAILAND**

by

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**A dissertation submitted to  
THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE STUDIES  
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of  
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**LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE:  
A CASE STUDY OF SIGNS IN MAJOR TRANSPORT HUBS  
IN THAILAND**

**Abstract**

This research paper is about linguistic landscape centred on the role of English as a global language for wider communication by Thai people in three major transport hubs in Thailand as case studies. Based on Kachru's (1989) concentric circle model, Thailand is regarded as one of the Expanding Circle countries where English is taught and learnt as a foreign language, although English seems to play an increasingly important communication role across the country. This research investigates signs at Suvarnabhumi airport in Samut Prakarn, Don Muang airport in Bangkok and Barommaratchachonnani bus terminal, known as Southern bus terminal, in Bangkok as case studies to find out the role of English as a foreign language on Thai signs. Methodologically, the research is used quantitative methods for presenting results, while qualitative methods are used to inform the broadly sociolinguistic data analysis approach. The signs are categorised based on 1) the sense of ownership, namely, official and commercial to see the leading roles of Thai and English languages and on both official signs and commercial signs, 2) the purpose of use, namely, information and advertising to see which language is frequently used for giving information and for advertisement, and 3) the languages they display, namely, monolingual, bilingual, trilingual and multilingual to see the role of foreign language(s) on Thai signs in these transport hubs. The results point to two key issues, firstly, that English is becoming a dominant foreign language on signs in the main transport hubs in Thailand and, secondly, that the existence of English on signs is associated with the intended target audience and the number of international visitors at each data collection site.

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# Contents

## Acknowledgements

List of figures	i
List of tables	vi

## Chapter 1 Aims and objectives

1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Description of the project	2
1.3 Rationale of study	3
1.4 Aims and objectives	4
1.5 Research questions and hypotheses	4

## Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Global English	7
2.2.1 English around the world	8
2.2.2 English in Asia	11
2.2.3 English in Thailand	12
2.3 Linguistic Landscape	16
2.3.1 Linguistic landscape	16
2.3.2 Linguistic landscape in Asia	18
2.3.3 Linguistic landscape in Thailand	19

## Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction	22
3.2 Research methodology and analytical approaches	22
3.3 Ethical issues	25
3.4 Problems associated with the project	26

## Chapter 4 Methods: Collecting and coding the data

4.1 Introduction	29
4.2 Data collection	29
4.2.1 Suvarnabhumi airport	30
4.2.2 Don Muang airport	30

4.2.3 Southern bus terminal	31
4.3 Categorising the data	32
4.3.1 Signs	32
4.3.2 Official vs. commercial	34
4.3.3 Information vs. advertising	36
4.3.4 Monolingual, bilingual, trilingual, multilingual	38
<b>Chapter 5 Interpreting the data</b>	
5.1 Introduction	43
5.2 Information vs. advertising	43
5.2.1 Suvarnabhumi airport	44
5.2.2 Don Muang airport	46
5.2.3 Southern bus terminal	49
5.2.4 All signs	51
5.3 Monolingual signs, bilingual signs, trilingual signs, and multilingual signs	53
5.3.1 Suvarnabhumi airport	54
5.3.2 Don Muang airport	62
5.3.3 Southern bus terminal	68
5.4 Data analysis	75
5.4.1 The role of English as the de facto official second language on the signs	76
5.4.2 Language(s) displayed and target audience	77
5.4.3 Language priority	79
5.4.4 American English	81
5.4.5 The roles of other foreign languages on the signs	82
5.4.6 Social and cultural information from the signs	84
<b>Chapter 6 Findings and conclusion</b>	
6.1 Findings	88
6.2 Suggestions for further research	90
6.3 Conclusion	93
<b>Bibliography</b>	95

## List of figures

Figure 2.2.1.1: Kachru' three concentric circle model	8
Figure 2.2.3.1: an example of the use of English in Thai ways (among Thai people)	14
Figure 2.2.3.2: an example of the use of English in Thai ways in public places	15
Figure 3.4.1: an example of a Roman script sign which is categorised as an English sign in this research	28
Figure 4.3.1.1: an example of a shop sign	32
Figure 4.3.1.2: an example of an office sign	32
Figure 4.3.1.3: an example of a counter sign	33
Figure 4.3.1.4: an example of a direction sign	33
Figure 4.3.1.5: an example of a billboard	33
Figure 4.3.1.6: an example of a sticker	34
Figure 4.3.1.7: an example of a road sign	34
Figure 4.3.2.1: an example of a commercial sign (giving information)	35
Figure 4.3.2.2: an example of a commercial sign (selling products)	36
Figure 4.3.3.1: an example of a sign for information (official)	36
Figure 4.3.3.2: an example of a sign for information (commercial)	37
Figure 4.3.3.3: an example of a sign for advertising	37
Figure 4.3.3.4: an advertising sign that belongs to the official group	38
Figure 4.3.3.5: an example of a sign that serves both purposes	38
Figure 4.3.4.1: an example of a monolingual Thai sign	39
Figure 4.3.4.2: an example of a monolingual English sign	39
Figure 4.3.4.3: an example of a bilingual Thai-English sign	40
Figure 4.3.4.4: an example of a bilingual English-Thai sign	40
Figure 4.3.4.5: an example of a Thai dominant bilingual sign (with some English words)	41
Figure 4.3.4.6: an example of an English dominant bilingual sign (with some Thai words on the top corner)	41
Figure 4.3.4.7: an example of a trilingual sign (English, Arabic, Thai)	41
Figure 4.3.4.8: an example of a multilingual sign (English, Japanese, Chinese, French, German)	42
Figure 5.2.1.1: official vs. commercial signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)	44
Figure 5.2.1.2: official signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)	45



Figure 5.2.1.3: commercial signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)	45
Figure 5.2.1.4: signs for advertising (Suvarnabhumi airport)	46
Figure 5.2.2.1: official vs. commercial signs (Don Muang airport)	47
Figure 5.2.2.2: official signs (Don Muang airport)	47
Figure 5.2.2.3: commercial signs (Don Muang airport)	48
Figure 5.2.2.4: signs for advertising (Don Muang airport)	48
Figure 5.2.3.1: official vs. commercial signs (Southern bus terminal)	49
Figure 5.2.3.2: official signs (Southern bus terminal)	50
Figure 5.2.3.3: commercial signs (Southern bus terminal)	50
Figure 5.2.3.4: signs for advertising (Southern bus terminal)	51
Figure 5.2.4.1: information vs. advertising (all signs)	52
Figure 5.2.4.2: signs for advertising (all signs)	52
Figure 5.2.4.3: official signs (all signs)	53
Figure 5.3.1.1: types of signs based on languages displayed (Suvarnabhumi airport)	55
Figure 5.3.1.2: monolingual signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)	55
Figure 5.3.1.2.1: a Halal sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	56
Figure 5.3.1.3: monolingual Thai signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)	56
Figure 5.3.1.4: monolingual English signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)	56
Figure 5.3.1.4.1 a monolingual Thai sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	57
Figure 5.3.1.4.2 a monolingual English sign (parallel version) (Suvarnabhumi airport)	57
Figure 5.3.1.5: bilingual signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)	58
Figure 5.3.1.5.1: a bilingual English-Chinese sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	58
Figure 5.3.1.5.2: a bilingual English-Japanese sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	58
Figure 5.3.1.5.3: a bilingual English-Arabic sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	59
Figure 5.3.1.5.4: a bilingual English-Hindi sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	59
Figure 5.3.1.6: official signs with different languages (Suvarnabhumi airport)	59
Figure 5.3.1.6.1: a bilingual English-Japanese official sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	60
Figure 5.3.1.6.2: a bilingual English-Chinese official sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	60
Figure 5.3.1.7 (a): commercial signs with different languages (Suvarnabhumi airport)	60

Figure 5.3.1.7 (b): commercial signs with different languages (Suvarnabhumi airport)	61
Figure 5.3.2.1: types of signs based on languages displayed (Don Muang airport)	62
Figure 5.3.2.2: monolingual signs (Don Muang airport)	63
Figure 5.3.2.3: monolingual Thai signs (Don Muang airport)	63
Figure 5.3.2.4: monolingual English signs (Don Muang airport)	64
Figure 5.3.2.5: bilingual signs (Don Muang airport)	64
Figure 5.3.2.5.1: a bilingual Thai-Chinese sign (Don Muang airport)	65
Figure 5.3.2.5.2: a bilingual English-German sign (Don Muang airport)	65
Figure 5.3.2.6: official signs with different languages (Don Muang airport)	66
Figure 5.3.2.6.1: a multilingual sign (Don Muang airport)	66
Figure 5.3.2.7: commercial signs with different languages (Don Muang airport)	67
Figure 5.3.2.7.1: a trilingual (English, Thai, Chinese) sign (Don Muang airport)	67
Figure 5.3.3.1: types of signs based on languages displayed (Southern bus terminal)	69
Figure 5.3.3.2: monolingual signs (Southern bus terminal)	69
Figure 5.3.3.3: monolingual Thai signs (Southern bus terminal)	70
Figure 5.3.3.4: monolingual English signs (Southern bus terminal)	70
Figure 5.3.3.4.1: a monolingual English official sign (Southern bus terminal)	70
Figure 5.3.3.5: bilingual signs (Southern bus terminal)	71
Figure 5.3.3.5.1: a bilingual Thai-Arabic sign (Southern bus terminal)	71
Figure 5.3.3.6: official signs with different languages (Southern bus terminal)	72
Figure 5.3.3.7: commercial signs with different languages (Southern bus terminal)	72
Figure 5.3.3.7.1: a trilingual (Thai, English, Japanese) sign (Southern bus terminal)	73
Figure 5.3.3.8: a bilingual Thai dominant sign: only logo in English (Southern bus terminal)	73
Figure 5.3.3.9: a bilingual Thai dominant sign: codemixing (Southern bus terminal)	74
Figure 5.4.2.1: a monolingual English sign: tour services center (Don Muang airport)	77

Figure 5.4.2.2: a monolingual English sign: tour service (Suvarnabhumi airport)	77
Figure 5.4.2.3: a monolingual English sign: VAT refund (Suvarnabhumi airport)	78
Figure 5.4.2.4: a monolingual English sign: phone rental (Suvarnabhumi airport)	78
Figure 5.4.2.5: a bilingual Thai dominant: ‘for Members of Parliament’ (Suvarnabhumi airport)	79
Figure 5.4.2.6: a bilingual Thai dominant: ‘special check-in row for government officials’ (Suvarnabhumi airport)	79
Figure 5.4.3.1: an official Thai-English sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	80
Figure 5.4.3.2: an official Thai-English sign (Don Muang airport)	80
Figure 5.4.3.3: an official Thai-English sign (Southern bus terminal)	80
Figure 5.4.3.4: a commercial English dominant sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	80
Figure 5.4.3.5: a commercial English-Thai sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	81
Figure 5.4.4.1: an example of American English spellings (Suvarnabhumi airport)	81
Figure 5.4.4.2: an example of American word choices: elevator (Don Muang airport)	82
Figure 5.4.4.3: an example of American word choices: elevator (Suvarnabhumi airport)	82
Figure 5.4.5.1: a bilingual English-Chinese sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	82
Figure 5.4.5.2: a bilingual Russian-English sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	83
Figure 5.4.4.3: a bilingual Korean-English sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	83
Figure 5.4.5.4: a bilingual English-Turkish sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	84
Figure 5.4.6.1: an ‘elder’ sign in front of the toilet (Suvarnabhumi airport)	85
Figure 5.4.6.2: an ‘elder’ sign in front of the toilet (Southern bus terminal)	85
Figure 5.4.6.3: a ‘reserve for the elder’ sign in a waiting area (Don Muang airport)	85
Figure 5.4.6.4: a ‘for monks only’ sign in a waiting area (Don Muang airport)	86
Figure 5.4.6.5: a ‘waiting room for monks’ sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)	86
Figure 5.4.6.6: a sign asking for a donation toward the building of a new Buddhist pavilion (Suvarnabhumi airport)	86
Figure 5.4.6.7: a sign giving the details of sizes and prices of Songkarn T-shirts (Southern bus terminal)	87

Figure 6.2.1: an example of a sign with loan words (Southern bus terminal)	91
Figure 6.2.2: an example of a sign with symbolic meanings (Suvarnabhumi airport)	91
Figure 6.2.3: an example of a sign with pictures and decorations (Southern bus terminal)	92

## List of tables

Table 5.2.1: information vs. advertising (Suvarnabhumi airport)	44
Table 5.2.2: information vs. advertising (Don Muang airport)	46
Table 5.2.3: information vs. advertising (Southern bus terminal)	49
Table 5.2.4: information vs. advertising (all signs)	51
Table 5.3.1: languages displayed on the signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)	54
Table 5.3.2: languages displayed on the signs (Don Muang airport)	62
Table 5.3.3: languages displayed on the signs (Southern bus terminal)	68

# Chapter 1 Aims and Objectives

## 1.1 Overview

In the past, when hearing the term ‘linguistic landscape, linguistic landscapes, linguistic landscaping or linguistic cityscape’, people might not understand what was meant. However, in recent years, since the groundbreaking work of Landry and Bourhis (1997) titled ‘Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study’ was published, the number of researchers who are interested in the existence of language surrounding them in public space has increased. The term ‘linguistic landscape’ and the other alternate terms referring to ‘the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region’, according to Landry and Bourhis (1997: 23), have become more familiar among scholars in linguistic fields.

This research project focusing on the study of linguistic landscape in major transport hubs in Thailand is composed of six chapters. This opening chapter provides an overview of the research project, project description, rationale of the study, aims and objectives, and research questions and hypotheses. Next, Chapter 2: Literature review contains a review of literature in the fields of global English and linguistic landscape. Third, Chapter 3: Methodology conveys information about the research methodology and analytical approaches, ethical issues, and problems associated with the project. Chapter 4: Methods: Collecting and coding the data reports how data were collected and categorised. The following chapter, Chapter 5: Interpreting the data, provides the results and data analysis. Finally, the findings from the research, suggestions for further research and conclusion come in Chapter 6: Findings and conclusion.

## 1.2 Description of the project

This research project is concerned with linguistic landscape in major public transport hubs in Thailand by focusing on the signs at the two main airports and a bus terminal, namely-Suvarnabhumi airport in Samut Prakarn, Don Muang airport in Bangkok, and Barommaratchachonnani bus terminal, known as Southern bus terminal, in Bangkok as case studies. The aims of the research project are to examine the role that English plays on Thai signs and compare the role of English with the roles of other foreign languages. According to Backhaus (2007: 4), English is used for wider communication and as a foreign language in Thailand, although Thai is the country's only official language.

This project draws its conceptual frameworks from preceding literature about linguistic landscape, such as the work by Landry and Bourhis (1997), Huebner (2006), and Backhaus (2007), by focusing on the widespread use of English on Thai signs arising from the role of English as a global language by using the signs in three public transport hubs as case studies. Like other pieces of linguistic landscape research, quantitative methods are used for presenting results. However, this research project is not purely statistical, because the numerical data are used as evidence that leads to the data analysis. Qualitatively, the data are analysed based on the employment of a broadly sociolinguistic approach along with social and cultural perspectives. As Coupland and Jaworski (1997: 1) mention, 'sociolinguistics is the study of language in its social contexts and the study of social life through linguistics'. Therefore, this project employs a broadly sociolinguistic approach to see the relations between Thai society and what is displayed on the signs. This study is partially ethnographic, as the data were collected from 'real world' contexts, in an unstructured way and interpreted in the contexts in which they exist (Hammersley, 1994: 1-2).

### **1.3 Rationale of study**

My interest in conducting research into linguistic landscape in Thailand was developed from the reading of two pieces of work about linguistic landscape in Bangkok by Backhaus (2007) as a section called 'Bangkok: Signs of Overt and Covert Language Policies' and the article titled 'Bangkok's Linguistic Landscapes: Environmental Print, Codemixing, and Language Change' by Huebner (2006). Personally, I am interested in linguistic landscape as a new growing linguistic field. Because there are not many pieces of literature and research into linguistic landscape, I hope that my research might be able to help expand the literature in this area. Based on my previous research titled 'The Use of English on Thai Food Packaging' (Ngampramuan, 2006), I realised that my research experience about English in Thailand should provide a good basis for doing a project about linguistic landscape in my country. In addition, as someone who has spent most of the life in Thailand, I believe that I should be able to offer an insightful view of cultural and social perspectives when analysing the data.

The reason why I chose to collect my data from the airports and the bus terminal is because every year, a considerable number of tourists come to visit Thailand. According to the statistical report of the Office of Tourism Development of Thailand: OTD (2009), Thailand welcomed 14,164,228 international tourists in 2007 and 14,536,382 in 2008. Regarding the statistics, it can be assumed that each year, millions of foreigners visit and see the signs at Suvarnabhumi airport, as it is the main airport of the country. The airport should, therefore, be the place that is most frequently visited by foreigners and where English is used for communicative purposes. The constant presence of the English language on the signs at this airport could be seen as part of the use of English as a means for wider communication of the country. The existence of English on Thai signs might be associated with foreigners' visits. Therefore, it should be interesting and worthwhile to study the signs



from contrasting locations: those that are regularly visited by foreigners like Suvarnabhumi airport, occasionally visited by international tourists like Don Muang airport, and hardly visited by foreign visitors like Southern bus terminal, and find out whether the presence of foreigners at each data collection site has an impact on the existence of the English language on the signs or not.

## **1.4 Aims and objectives**

In relation to the related literature about linguistic landscape and about English as a global language, this research has two aims:

- to examine what role English plays on Thai signs through a case study of the signs from the two airports and the bus terminal
- to compare the role of English with the roles of other foreign languages found on signs displayed in the major transport hubs in Thailand.

In pursuit of these aims, there are also two objectives of the research:

- to verify the previous research studies about English in Thailand which generally conclude that English plays a leading role as a foreign language in the country
- to point out the linguistic landscape characteristics of Thai signs based on the data available for this project

## **1.5 Research questions and hypotheses**

Based on the available data, it is possible that various research questions can be developed. However, as the focus of this research study is on the role of English in Thailand through

the study of signs in the main transport hubs, three research questions are developed in relation to the research aims as follows:

- 1) What role does English play in the linguistic landscape in major transport hubs in Thailand?
- 2) Why does English play this role?
- 3) How does it vary according to contexts?

In addition to the research questions, there are also three hypotheses:

- 1) The majority of signs that belong to the airports and the bus terminal, or that are issued by the airport authorities or the bus terminal authorities, so-called 'official signs' in this research, should be informative, for the reason that these transport hubs do not depend on the sales volume of products or services unlike airlines, shops and private businesses. The presence of informative signs might have a link with the presence of foreign languages on the signs as well. As Baker (2008: 138) mentions, English is the de facto official second language in Thailand, in the case of official, English should co-exist on the signs along with Thai more than any other foreign language.
- 2) There should be more English and other foreign languages found on the advertising signs than informative signs, because the more languages presence on the signs, the wider groups of customers the signs can reach. Hence, the languages display on advertising signs should be more various than those display on the informative signs in order to reach as many customers as possible. In relation to the advertising purposes, the majority of advertising signs should belong to the commercial group, which, in this research, refers to private businesses such as airlines, restaurants and private shops, because signs can be used as part of marketing strategies to attract customers' attention.

- 3) The presence of English on the signs should be associated with the number of foreigners and intended target audience at each data collection site. If this hypothesis is plausible, Suvarnabhumi airport should have more signs that contain the English and other foreign languages than Don Muang airport and Southern bus terminal, because it is an international airport that is more frequently visited by international visitors than any other transport hub.

This chapter has presented the overview of the project, project description, rationale of study, aims and objectives, and research questions and hypotheses. The next chapter covers a review of literature regarding global English and linguistic landscape.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the literature concerning global English and linguistic landscape. The first part examines the global status of English in three areas from a ‘global’ to a more ‘local’ perspective, namely, 1) English around the world, 2) English in Asia, and 3) English in Thailand. The second part introduces 1) the concepts of linguistic landscape 2) the work regarding linguistic landscape in Asia and 3) the preceding literature about linguistic landscape in Bangkok.

### **2.1 Global English**

This section begins with a review of the literature about the status of English around the world, as it is worthwhile to see the role of English worldwide and this contextualise the role of English in Thailand. In particular, the role of English in Asia should not be overlooked, as Thailand is part of that region. It will also be helpful to look at related literature about English in Asia to find some common ground, as some countries such as China and Japan also belong to the group of the Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1989). Hence, the literature review about English around the world and English in Asia should provide a good basis for understanding the role of English in Thailand.

## 2.2.1 English around the world

To understand the use of English in different countries, Kachru (1989) initiated a concentric circle model as a means to categorise countries into three groups. Figure 2.2.1.1 illustrates Kachru's (1989) the three concentric circles of Englishes.

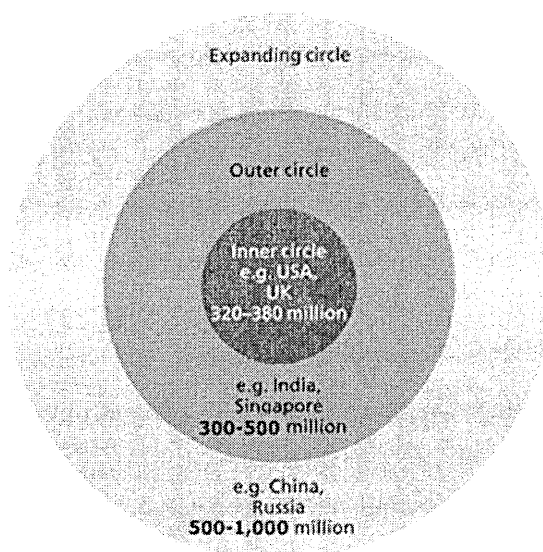


Figure 2.2.1.1: Kachru' three concentric circle model

Source: *English as a global language* by Crystal (2003: 61)

Based on Figure 2.2.1.1, countries across the globe are divided into 1) the Inner Circle referring to the countries where English is the native language, 2) the Outer Circle referring to the countries where English is used as an institutionalised additional language, second language or one of the official languages, 3) the Expanding Circle referring to the countries where English is regarded as a foreign language (Kachru, 1989). Based on this model, Thailand is fitted into the third category, because English is taught, learnt and used as a foreign language.

Although Kachru's three concentric circles is regarded as one of the most influential models to describe the expansion of English across the globe, it has been criticised that the

division of the circles by geography and genetics cannot reflect the real use of English in everyday life of people in those circles. Recently, people in the Expanding Circle such as Sweden and Denmark may more frequently use English than people in the Outer Circle, such as in Myanmar and Ghana (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangus, 1999). In some Outer Circle countries like Kenya and Nigeria, not everyone can speak English. English is normally used by the elites and even sometimes has a 'gatekeeping status' in the society (Le Ha, 2005: 249). In the case of Thailand, the rich and the middle-class are the main groups of people who have access to English, while the poor cannot afford to learn English or send their children to a bilingual school, where English is used as a medium of instruction along with their local language. Presumably, it can be said that the ability to use English of Thai people appears to be associated with their family background.

Despite the fact about the relationship between people in the circles and their frequent use of English, Figure 2.2.1.1 illustrates that the numbers of English users in the Outer Circle and Expanding Circle countries are greater than the number of native speakers. Jenkins (2009: 4) accepts that currently English is used as a contact language among people in the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle rather than with people in the Inner Circle. For the reason that nowadays English users are mainly non-native speakers, English is now becoming the language that is the most widely taught, read and spoken than ever McKay (2002: 9). In the era of globalisation, English is used as an international means of communication among people (Scholte, 2001; Widdowson, 1997: 29). Regarding the Expanding Circle countries, Short *et al.* (2001: 1) explain that the countries in the Expanding Circle adopt English as a 'foreign' language in their communities, because it is regarded as a way to connect with a global community. Apart from being a means of communication, Crystal (2003: 24) reports that English can help the countries gain higher economic power by making the trade markets of the countries more attractive for foreign investors. Furthermore, it is also the language that is regarded as 'a window on the world

of science and technology' (Strevens, 1992: 30). Crystal (2003: 110) agrees and adds that 'English is a medium of a great deal of the world's knowledge' not only in science and technology but also the business of education. Since the 1960s, many countries in the Expanding Circle such as the Netherlands use English as a medium language of instruction in higher education (Crystal, 2003: 112). At present, many universities in Thailand also use English as the main language of teaching and require students ,including those who take Thai programmes, to submit an English abstract along with their Master's dissertations and PhD theses both written in Thai and in English for the reason of further research, international publications and international conferences. Based on Crystal (2003: 3), English can be seen as the language that has achieved a global status because it is the only language that 'develops a special role that is recognized in every country'.

Due to the leading role of English and the expanding use of English in the three circles, English is now globally used across cultures in different countries (Bamgbose, 2001: 359). Strevens (1992: 27-28) agrees that English is the language that is the most frequently used by the world communities. However, Graddol (1997: 58) predicts that although in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, English might still be the most common shared and preferred language among people around the world, the monopolistic position of English might be challenged by other languages, especially Chinese (Mandarin) and Spanish due to regional economic cooperation.

As regards the literature in this section, it might be concluded that in the era of globalisation, because English is the only language that is widely used by people in different countries across the globe, it is the language that achieves a global status (Crystal, 2003: 3). It could also be concluded that the main reasons why countries in the Expanding circle adopt English as a dominant foreign language derive from the values of the language as a tool for wider communication, to gain economic power, and to access the worlds of

science, technology and business of education (Widdowson, 1997: 29; Crystal, 2003). Despite the widespread use of English around the world, in the next 50 years, the predominant role of English might be challenged by other foreign languages (Graddol, 1997: 58). The next section presents the literature regarding English in Asia.

### **2.2.2 English in Asia**

Based on Figure 2.2.1.1, all countries in Asia belong to the Outer Circle and Expanding Circle. In this region, there are more countries where English is used as a foreign language than the countries where it is regarded as an institutionalised language. Asia contains India, the biggest Outer Circle country, which has around 60-million English users and China, which is the biggest Expanding Circle country and has the highest number of over-200-million students learning English as a foreign language (Kachru, 1996: 1). The number of English users in these two countries alone seems to already outweigh the number of English native speakers in the Inner Circle.

In Asia, the employment of English as a dominant foreign language derives from its economic value (Crystal, 2003). Kachru (1996: 3) refers to the case of Japan where English is used as a dominant foreign language for trade and commerce in the country. Tam and Weiss (2004: vii) report that in China, 'English has also been a medium the Chinese desire for globalization.' In Hong Kong, English is also regarded as the language of modernity that leads to economic, technological and cultural developments (Parker, 2004: 33). In addition, English also plays a role as a working language of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), most of whose member countries belong to the group of the Expanding Circle (Baker, 2008: 132). Baker (2008: 132) argues that the use of English as a working language can be seen as a political role of English in the region as well. Because of the importance of English in the region, the number of English users has



increased. However, different first languages and social and cultural backgrounds of the users have led to a wide variety of Englishes in Asia (Kachru, 1996). For example, in Singapore, Singlish or the English language mixed with some local Chinese and used by the Singaporeans is found across the country in both spoken and written forms (Speak Good English Movement, 2009). In 1996, there was a conference titled 'English is an Asian Language', which was held in Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines and officially supported by the Australian Government in cooperation with other countries in the region. It might be possible to say that the conference reflects the importance of English as an important language in Asia. This seems to challenge Kachru's (1989) model in that in some Expanding Circle countries like Japan and Thailand, English seems to play a bigger role as a foreign language for the reason of trade and tourism than a role as an institutionalised language in some Outer Circle countries like Myanmar and Brunei.

Based on the information in this section, it might be possible to conclude that like its role around the world, English plays a dominant role in Asia. To Asian countries where English is regarded as a second language, an official language and a foreign language, English is considered as a significant language that can help countries in the region to gain economic power. Besides, as a working language of ASEAN, English seems to have a political role in this region too. In the next section, the focus is more on English in Thailand.

### **2.2.3 English in Thailand**

Thailand belongs conventionally to the Expanding Circle, as English is taught and learnt as a foreign language, according to Kachru's (1989) model. The only official language of the country is Standard Thai, although there are also other languages, such as Northern Khmer and Lao, spoken within the borders of the country (Smalley, 1994: 13).

Smalley (1994: 25) analyses the function of English in Thailand and notes that English is not only a language for wider communication but also a symbol of modernity to connect Thailand with a larger world. This statement seems valid, as the Thai government sees English as an important language and makes it a required school subject (Backhaus, 2007: 44). English is not only used in education but also used as a 'lingua franca' for international relations, business, education and tourism (Baker, 2008: 135-136). Thailand does not have a second official language; however, Smalley (1994: 25) makes a claim that 'Thailand as a nation has two languages, Standard Thai and Standard English. The first is the internal language of the nation, the second its external language.' Baker (2008: 138) supports the view of Smalley (1994) that in Thailand, 'English is in practice the de facto second language and used in a wide range of domains.' For the reason that part of the main sources of the country's income is from tourism, English has been widely used across the country both in the public sector and the private sector (Huebner, 2006: 33). It is common to find signs along the streets and menus in a restaurant available in English as well as Thai. Moreover, at present, all websites of the 13 Thai ministries are available in two languages: Thai and English. Smalley (1994: 2004) analyses the presence of English in Thailand that 'English messages are directed at tourists and others from abroad.'

However, after a decade, English is now used as a means for communication between Thai people and foreigners as well as among the Thai themselves in a written form. It is interesting why Thai people use English when they write to each other, although English is not their mother tongue (Glass, 2009). Part of the reasons might be because of the status of English in the country, as Backhaus (2007: 44) claims that currently English enjoys a high prestige value in Thailand. The spread and the frequent use of English by Thai people finally lead to the development of a new variety of English in Thailand. The use of English in Thai ways seems to be a relatively new variety in World Englishes, as distinctive Thai variety of English has nevertheless been documented so far. According to

data available and my observation, part of Thai variety of English used among Thai people comes in forms of the mixture of English and Thai in the same sentence, some lexical borrowings from English in Thai and code switching between English and Thai words. For example, in Thai, particles such as *ka* or *kha*, *kub* or *khrap* , and *ja* are used for a communicative function by women, men, and among friends respectively to make the utterances politer or to show respect to the addressee (Smyth, 2002: 126). Based on my personal observation, when Thai people use English among each other, they also apply this norm by adding these particles after English words or sentences like they do when speaking to each other in Thai. Therefore, it is common to see messages written and used to communicate among Thais on a social networking website like *facebook*<sup>1</sup> as ‘Hello ka’ or ‘I am fine kub’. This is an example of Thaiglish from my own facebook page.

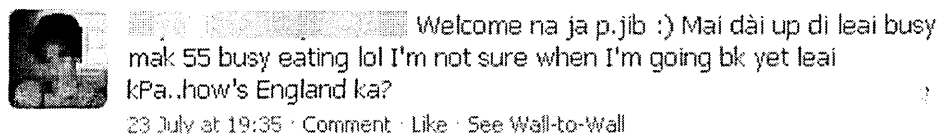


Figure 2.2.3.1: an example of the use of English in Thai ways (among Thai people)

The example shows the mixture of the use of English words and Thai words transliterated into English such as *leai* or *loei* (already), *mak* (a lot). The use of particles such as *na ja* and *ka* were added after each phrase and each sentence to make them politer. However, these words do not change any meaning of a sentence or a phrase. The use of English in Thai ways, such as in the example given can be commonly found on text messages and other instant messaging channels like *msn messenger*, *skype* and *AOL* as well. This phenomenon can be seen as the influence of English language on Thai teenagers like other Thais who see English as a symbol of modernity (Huebner, 2006: 33). However, currently, this feature of Thai English is still found only on written language not spoken language.

<sup>1</sup> [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

Apart for the mixture of some Thai words, English in Thai ways might also come in the form of grammatically correct English messages. However it might not make any sense to foreigners who do not have socio-cultural background knowledge of Thailand, shown in the example below:

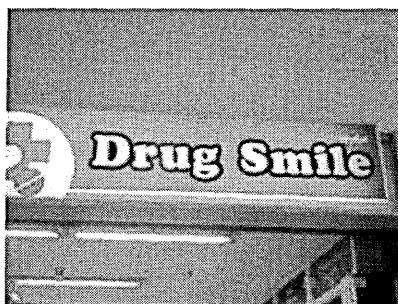


Figure 2.2.3.2: an example of English the use of English in Thai ways in public places

From Figure 2.2.3.2, *Drug Smile* is a name of a drugstore located in the Southern bus terminal. Based on my socio-cultural background, *Drug* in this case refers to a drugstore, and *Smile* refers to the nature of Thai people, as Thailand is also known to others as ‘the land of smile’. *Drug Smile* implies that staff are service-minded and willing to help customers. This shop sign might not be aimed at foreigners as the Southern bus terminal is hardly visited by foreign tourists, but having a shop name in English seems to have a relation with the concept of modernity.

The concept of English as a language for modernity appears to be developed among Thai people. It is interesting that in the markets, more than 50 percent of Thai products use English script and English names on their packaging (Ngampramuan, 2006). Kapper (1992: 5) suggests that Thai consumers associate English with modern concepts of the products. In addition, Kapper (1992: 5) indicates that the existence of the English language on a label can help to influence the attitude of consumers to buy the product no matter whether the language is understood or not.

In Thailand, English has a high prestige value in the country as it does in Asia and around the world (Backhaus, 2007: 44; Crystal, 2003). English is considered as a language for wider communication and as a symbol of modernity from Thai people's perspectives (Smalley, 1994: 25). It is used in a wide range of domains and the country's de facto second language (Baker, 2008: 138).

This section has provided information about global English, English in Asia and English in Thailand. The following section examines the literature about linguistic landscape, linguistic landscape in Asia and linguistic landscape in Thailand.

## **2.3 Linguistic landscape**

In the first section, the general concept of linguistic landscape is introduced, especially given that linguistic landscape is relatively new in linguistic fields. The second section contains information about linguistic landscape in Asia. The last section covers the two main pieces of literature by Huebner (2006) and Backhaus (2007), both of whom conducted linguistic landscape research regarding Thailand.

### **2.3.1 Linguistic landscape**

Linguistic landscape (LL) relates to the study of 'the language texts that are present in public space' (Gorter, 2006: 1). According to Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25), linguistic landscape can be understood in the following terms 'the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory region, or urban agglomeration'. In the case of more than one language on the signs, linguistic landscape can also reveal the social context or the multilingualism of the area

(Gorter, 2006: 1). As it is concerned with the written form of language(s), the data are normally collected from urban areas, where there are more signs to be seen than the countryside. For this reason, it is also known as 'linguistic cityscape' (Gorter, 2006: 2). Gorter (2006: 81) claims that in the recent years, scholars in sociolinguistics and applied linguists have paid more attention to linguistic landscape in regard to an increasing number of publications, of individual papers and colloquia at conferences.

The research papers about LL mainly come under the theme of multilingualism in order to find out which language is dominant in multilingual cities, such as the work by Cenoz and Gorter (2006), and Ben-Rafael *et al.* (2006). However, in cities where there is only one official language, the focus can be on the influence or role of a foreign language or the power and solidarity in the society, such as in the work by Huebner (2006) and Backhaus (2006). In some pieces of research, data are categorised by the ownership of the signs to see a sign coding scheme or a language policy of the study area (Gorter, 2006; Shohamy, 2006). However, the terms and categories used might be different according to researchers' viewpoints. For instance, in Ben-Rafael *et al.* (2006)'s work about LL in Israel, the signs are categorised into 'top-down' which refers to the LL items issued by national and public bureaucracies and 'bottom-up' which refers to the signs issued by individual social actors (Ben-Rafael *et al.*, 2006: 14). Shohamy (2006) also divided the signs into the groups of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. According to Shohamy (2006: 115), 'top-down LL items represent items that are issued by the state and/ or central bureaucracies, while bottom-up refers to items that are issued by autonomous social actors selected by individuals and representing a number of domains, name of shops, private announcements, business, etc.'. In the same way, Backhaus (2006) categorised the signs into 'official' and 'nonofficial' in his research into LL in Tokyo. According to Backhaus (2006: 56), official signs refer to the signs set up by governmental organisations, while nonofficial signs refer to the LL items that belong to citizens.

Research into LL appears to be based on quantitative methods, as results are shown in numbers and calculated in percentages. However, LL study is not purely statistical research, but it appears that the statistical data are used as evidence that leads to the analysis under various perspectives such as applied linguistics, sociolinguistics and sociology (Gorter, 2006: 87). The study of LL allows researchers to apply various kinds of methodology, frameworks, and approaches for the best result. Gorter (2006: 88) suggests that multidisciplinary approaches should also be utilised for a better understanding of the linguistic landscape in the studied areas. However, as there still has not been any perfect combination of methodology and frameworks for conducting LL research, Gorter (2006: 2) recommends that the methodology of linguistic landscape has to be developed further. It is also possible that in one study, different perspectives and approaches can be combined. In addition, in LL research reports, ethnic background, historical background and linguistic background of people in the study are provided so that the readers can make a link between the social context of the studied area and the statistical results shown.

This section presents the information about LL in general. The following section discusses literature regarding LL in Asia.

### **2.3.2 Linguistic landscape in Asia**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are still not many research studies about LL. In the case of LL in Asia, there is one main research study about multilingual signs in Japan by Backhaus (2006).

The LL research was done in Tokyo which is regarded by Backhaus (2006: 52) as ‘one of the prototypes of a monolingual society’. Multilingual signs, however, can be frequently found around the city. In Backhaus (2006)’ research, the signs are divided by the sense of

ownership into the groups of 'official' and 'nonofficial' signs for the study of power and solidarity in the society. The study reveals the statistics that both official and nonofficial multilingual signs contain more English words than Japanese words, although English is taught and learnt as a foreign language. There are also other foreign languages on the signs such as Chinese, Korean and French, but the roles of these languages are not significant. This finding appears to be associated with the statement in section 2.2.2 that English plays a dominant role in the region and is seen as the language of modernity that can reach wider groups of people.

Apart from LL research in Japan, two pieces of research on LL in Thailand will be discussed in the next section

### **2.3.3 Linguistic landscape in Thailand**

This section reports on the two LL studies in Bangkok carried out by Huebner (2006) and by Backhaus (2007).

Huebner (2006) explored 15 areas (14 in Bangkok and one in another province) to find out about language contact, language mixing and language dominance by focusing on the influence of English as a global language on Thai society through the study of signs in Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. The analysis was done based on the information from 613 signs. Huebner also expected that the study should be able to provide a linguistic framework for analysing types of codemixing between English and Thai (Huebner, 2006: 37). Huebner divided the signs according to the sense of ownership into the groups of 'government' and 'nongovernment' to see which language plays a leading role on signs owned by the two groups. The statistics show that in the group of government signs, there are more monolingual Thai signs than Thai and Roman signs (Huebner, 2006: 39).



Huebner (2006: 50-51) explains about the term 'Roman script' that 'Technically English is written in Roman script. The vast majority of signs in this study written in Roman script, however, contain English lexicon, syntax, spelling and/or orthographic conventions. Therefore the term 'Roman script' will be used only when discussing the entire data set and in those rare instances where Roman script is used with lexicon, syntax, spelling and/or orthographic conventions other than English (i.e. French, Japanese).' To put it simply, 'Roman' or 'Roman scripts' are used to refer to words and phrases that look like English in terms of scripts but do not have any meaning in English as spelt. On the other hand, nongovernment signs display more Thai and Roman script than monolingual Thai signs. In his analysis, Huebner (2006: 39) concludes that the result reflects the Thai government policy that Thai is used as the official language and 'English is used as the official language of wider communication internationally'. Huebner (2006) also tried to study the extent of linguistic diversity in Bangkok by going to the areas that are dominantly lived and worked in by people of Chinese origin, by Japanese people, and by people from countries in the Middle East countries. However, the statistics reveal that apart from English, other foreign languages do not play a vital role on Thai signs. Based on his study, Huebner (2006: 48) claims that English has an influence on Thai society in both lexical borrowing and the areas of orthography, pronunciation and syntax. He also concludes that the study of signs in each neighbourhood presents 'a picture of the social structure, the power relations and status of various languages within individual neighbourhoods and the larger community' (Huebner, 2006: 50).

The other work is by Backhaus (2007) who did a study of signs in Bangkok with a focus on overt and covert language policies. His work is based on the idea of linguistic diversity in Thailand suggested by Smalley (1994). Three areas, one of which has a high density of Thai people of Chinese origin, one of which has a high density of foreigners, and one of which is not influenced by any minority group, were selected to examine the roles of

different languages on the signs. Backhaus (2007) divided the signs by the sense of ownership into the groups of 'government' and 'nongovernment' as Huebner (2006) did. Based on his study, the languages displayed on the nongovernment signs have a relation with people living in the areas studied. In the Chinese-dominant area, there is more Chinese script used on the signs than Roman and Thai scripts. However, in the area of foreign residences, there are more signs in Roman scripts than English and Thai signs. In the non-dominant area, signs containing Thai are more frequently found than the signs with English or Chinese languages (Backhaus, 2007: 44). The statistics also demonstrate that 59.4% of the government signs in all areas contain only Thai script and 33.7% display both Thai and Roman scripts (Backhaus, 2007: 45). The term 'Roman scripts' in Backhaus' (2007) work appears to include English script and other languages written in Roman alphabet, such as, French, German and Japanese transliterated into English.

The research by Huebner (2006) and Backhaus (2007) present the information that shows the leading role of English as a foreign language in Thailand. However, cultural and social information regarding the use of English by Thai people is not presented.

According to both research studies, it can be seen that although other foreign languages are present on the signs, English is a dominant foreign language, which is associated with the result of the LL study in Tokyo. Regarding the information from the 'English in Thailand' section, the presence of English on Thai signs can be possibly seen as a result of English being a global language for wider communication.

This literature review chapter has examined the related literature regarding global English and linguistic landscape. The next chapter presents the research methodology and analytical frameworks, ethical issues, and problems associated with the project.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research methodologies and analytical approaches that are employed in this study. The methodology discusses both qualitative and quantitative paradigms in combination with a broadly sociolinguistic approach for data analysis. This chapter also covers the issues of ethical consideration in doing a piece of research, and the problems associated with the project.

### **3.2 Research methodology and analytical approaches**

This section covers general ideas of research methodology and analytical approaches that will be employed in this research.

According to Blaxter *et al.* (2006: 58), methodology refers to ‘the approach or paradigm that underpins the research’. Moreover, Blaxter *et al.* (2006: 59) explains that the most common paradigms for doing research are *quantitative* and *qualitative*.

Regarding quantitative methods, Miller (1995: 154) clarifies that ‘quantitative methods are not primarily about complicated statistics but simply about a concern of quantity.’ Brannen (1992: 5) analyses that ‘quantitative research is typically associated with the process of enumerative induction’. In addition, Brannen (1992: 5) also points out that one of the main purposes of quantitative methods is to find out particular characteristics of the sample population through the use of inferential statistics. On the other hand, Devine (1995: 137) describes qualitative methods as ‘a range of techniques including participant

observation (overt and covert observation and involvement) and intensive interviewing (in-depth individual and group interviews).’ Mason (2002: 1) comments that qualitative researchers can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, have understandings, experiences and imagining towards research participants. In addition, qualitative methodology can also be applied to research in different perspectives and disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies (Flick, 2002: viii). There are different ways to collect data in qualitative research such as interviews, focus groups, narratives, observation and ethnography (Flick, 2002). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 1) indicate that the term ‘qualitative research’ overlaps with the term ‘ethnography’. Taylor and Smith (2008:6) also support that the term ethnography is difficult to define. However, in this research project, the term ‘ethnography’ is clarified based on Hammersley (1994). Hammersley (1994: 1-2) explains that the ethnographic research should have the following characteristics:

- ‘(a) It is concerned with analysis of empirical data that are systematically selected for the purpose.
- (b) Those data come from ‘real world’ contexts, rather than being produced under experimental conditions created by the researcher.
- (c) Data are gathered from a *range* of sources, but observation and/ or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones.
- (d) The approach to data collection is ‘unstructured’, in the sense that it does not involve following through a detailed plan set up at the beginning; nor are the categories used for interpreting what people say and do pre-given or fixed.
- (e) The focus is a single setting or group, of relatively small scale; or a small number of these. In life history research the focus may even be a single individual.
- (f) The analysis of the data involves interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions and mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most.’

Based on Hammersley’s (1994) definition, this research is partially ethnographic, because the data were collected in an unstructured way from ‘real world’ contexts which are the

two airports and the bus terminal in this case. In addition, the signs are analysed in relation to the situated nature of language use. The numbers of foreign visitors at the bus terminal were observed during the period of data collection at this site. However, this research study does not directly involve interviewing people or participant observation as other ethnographic research studies do.

In terms of presenting and analysing data for my LL research, according to Gorter (2006: 2), the methodology of LL still needs further development. Therefore, in my project, I adopt mixed methods that combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Brannen, 1992). Quantitative methods are used for presenting my data. Like other LL research studies, my data are presented in numerical forms and in percentage, as evidence for data analysis and findings. Qualitative methods are used in the data analysis which focuses on features of signs in major transport hubs in Thailand. In the data analysis section, a broadly sociolinguistic approach along with social and cultural perspectives is used as a tool for interpreting the data. Sociolinguistics is concerned with the role of language in conveying information and the social relationships between people and languages (Trudgill, 2000: 2). Coupland and Jaworski (1997: 1) define that 'sociolinguistics is the study of language in its social contexts and the study of social life through linguistics.' As the research aims are to examine why English plays a role on the signs in major transport hubs in Thailand and how the presence of English on the signs relate to the number of foreign visitors at each data collection site, a sociolinguistic approach seems to be well-fitted as a tool to analyse the data in Thailand's contexts.

In terms of the reflexive character of the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 14-15), my data analysis might be criticised as being subjective. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 9) comment that ordinary people including ethnographers cannot avoid relying on

common-sense knowledge. In this research, I generally use social and cultural background knowledge when analysing the data.

This section covers the issues of methodology and frameworks. The following section presents another important issue that should not be overlooked when doing a piece of research, ethical issues.

### **3.3 Ethical issues**

Ethics is another issue of concern in doing research. Based on the Open University ethical guidelines<sup>2</sup> and the 'Triage Document'<sup>3</sup> which is used as a basic document to check whether my project needed an ethical approval or not, according to the first question 'Does the proposed project involve collecting data or materials for human participants?', my answer is 'No'. Because I collected my data from signs at the airports and the bus terminal, in this case, the document shows that 'No- you do not need to gain ethical approval from HPMEC<sup>4</sup>...'. To ensure that ethical approval is not really needed for my research, I checked all of my data and my analysis as to whether any of these causes any harm to people or myself as a researcher. I concluded that my research project does no harm to ordinary people and the researcher.

After checking with both Suvarnabhumi airport and Don Muang airport authorities by phone and looking through the websites<sup>5</sup>, I found that taking pictures at the airports is not prohibited in Thailand. Therefore, I did not have to inform the authorities regarding my

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<sup>2</sup> [intranet.open.ac.uk/strategy-unit/offices/ethics/index.shtml](http://intranet.open.ac.uk/strategy-unit/offices/ethics/index.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> [www.open.ac.uk/research-ethics/pics/d91484.pdf](http://www.open.ac.uk/research-ethics/pics/d91484.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> HPMEC stands for the Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee

<sup>5</sup> [www.suvarnabhumiairport.com/](http://www.suvarnabhumiairport.com/)

[www2.airportthai.co.th/airportnew/bangkok/index.asp?lang=en/](http://www2.airportthai.co.th/airportnew/bangkok/index.asp?lang=en/)

data collection. In the case of Southern bus terminal, I asked the information counter whether I needed to get permission before taking pictures of the signs or not. The answer was that people were allowed to take pictures in the Southern bus terminal, with the exception of a security centre area for security reasons. Hence, my data collection did not go against any law and was not done in any illegal way.

Although my research does not require any ethical approval document, in reality, my research topic seems to relate to the privacy of people as well. When taking the photos of shop signs, I did not go and ask the shop owners/ shopkeepers individually whether they would allow me to take the photos of their signs and use them in my research or not. It might become a matter of concern if people who have the rights over the signs disagree with my use of their signs in this project. Regarding the preceding literature, although photos of signs are shown as part of LL research papers, the information about ethical issues has never been given or available in any study. As Gorter (2006: 2) states that the methodology of LL still needs to be developed further, LL researchers should pay attention to ethical issues as well as methodology, due to the fact that it is an important topic in doing any piece of research.

Besides ethical issues, this chapter discusses the problems associated with the project in the following section.

### **3.4 Problems associated with the project**

During my work on this project, there are two main difficulties about categorisation that I encountered.

The first problem is about finding the right category labels when dividing the signs by the sense of ownership. During my data collection, I tried to photograph all signs available outside the departure gates in each data collection site without a focus on photographing any particular kind of signs. The data categorisation took longer time than I expected, because I had to go through all of the signs one by one, looked at the details on each sign and tried to find categories that were best-fitted with my data and research focus. At the beginning, I intended to classify the signs into the groups of 'government' and 'nongovernment' as in the previous work about LL in Bangkok by Huebner (2006) and Backhaus (2007). Nevertheless, none of the data collection sites belongs to the Thai government. If the data had been categorised into government and nongovernment, all signs in my research would have been in the category of nongovernment. Therefore, I decided to use the terms 'official' signs to refer to all signs that belong to the airports and the bus terminal and 'commercial' signs to refer to all signs owned by private sector, such as airlines, shops, restaurants and other private businesses.

The second problem relates to the issue of English vs. Roman/ Roman scripts. When the data were grouped, I did not include the group of 'Roman/ Roman scripts' as it is shown as one category in the work about LL studies in Bangkok by Huebner (2006) and Backhaus (2007) due to the different locations of data collection. It appears in their work that 'Roman' or 'Roman scripts' are used to refer to languages that look like English because of the use of Roman alphabet, as mentioned in section 2.3.3. Roman scripts in Huebner's (2006) and Backhaus' (2007) work include the languages like French, German, Russia and any other language that uses Roman alphabet to transliterate from the original language into English-like language so that people can pronounce it. Because one of this research aims is to compare the roles of other foreign languages with the role of English, many signs displaying Roman scripts in Huebner's (2006) and Backhaus' (2007) work are, in this research, categorised into the groups of other foreign languages, such as Russian,



German, French and Turkish. Hence, the group of Roman script is excluded in this research so that the roles of other foreign languages can be seen. However, in the case that there is a sign written in Roman alphabet and does not belong to any foreign language category as in Figure 3.4.1, it will be put into the category of English signs. Because in this research, the number of this kind of signs is very small, it should not have an effect on the research results.

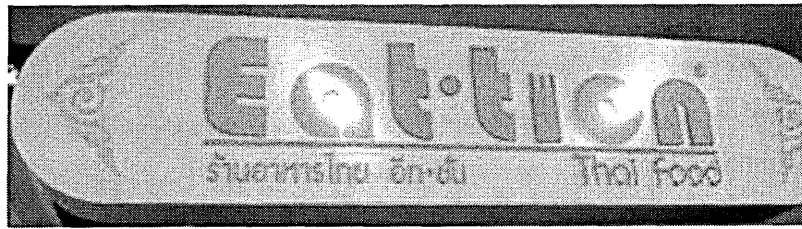


Figure 3.4.1: an example of a Roman script sign which is categorised as an English sign in this research

This chapter has described research methodology and analytical approaches employed in this research project, ethical issues and the problems associated with the project. Next, Chapter 4: Methods: Collecting and coding the data, demonstrates how data were collected and how they were categorised.

## **Chapter 4 Methods: Collecting and coding the data**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical issues about research methods and analytical frameworks. This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the data collection and research methods employed in this research project. The 'data collection' section demonstrates all detailed information about how data were collected, which methods were used and gives information regarding each data collection site. The 'categorising the data' section points out how data were categorised and explains why they were categorised that way.

### **4.2. Data Collection**

The data in this project were collected in an unstructured way from in and around Suvarnabhumi airport, Don Muang airport, and Southern bus terminal during March 2009. There was no plan for specific amounts of data to be collected each day and from each site. However, there was an intention to collect as many signs from each data collection site as possible. Since this research is an individual project, there was only one researcher, myself, who went into field work. All signs used in this project were recorded by a digital camera. The technology advancement made it convenient to collect hundreds of photos at a time without worrying about film and paying for photo development.

The time spent on collecting data from each site was various depending on the sizes of the places. In the case of Don Muang airport, it took only 2 days to photograph 102 signs.

Regarding Suvarnabhumi airport, it took 6 days to take the photos of 401 signs, as the airport is big. In the case of Southern bus terminal, I spent 3 days to photograph 103 signs. In total, this project has 606 photos of signs from the three data collection sites. Sections 4.2.1- 4.2.3 gives information regarding each data collection site.

#### **4.2.1 Suvarnabhumi airport**

Suvarnabhumi airport is the main airport of Thailand and a travel hub in Asia. It is also ranked as the world's largest passenger terminal<sup>6</sup>. There were 102 airlines operating at Suvarnabhumi airport during the data collection period. According to the Airports of Thailand Public Company Limited (AOT) (2009: 42) annual report, in 2008, there were 41,480,480 passengers flying to and from Suvarnabhumi airport, while Don Muang airport had only 3,188, 950 passengers. Due to the size of the airport, the majority of the data of this research project (401 signs) were collected from Suvarnabhumi airport. Based on the greater numbers of passengers and airlines as well as the larger terminal size, signs at Suvarnabhumi airport are far greater than those at Don Muang airport and the bus terminal.

#### **4.2.2 Don Muang airport**

Don Muang airport has only one passenger terminal for domestic flights. There were only four local airlines operated at Don Muang airport at the time of data collection. From March 1948 to August 2008, Don Muang airport was the only airport in Thailand for international flights<sup>7</sup>. However, since Suvarnabhumi airport was officially opened in September 2008, all international airlines have used the new airport instead. The terminal for international flights at Don Muang airport was closed down, and only one terminal for

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<sup>6</sup> [www.airportsuvarnabhumi.com/](http://www.airportsuvarnabhumi.com/)

<sup>7</sup> [www2.airportthai.co.th/airportnew/bangkok/index.asp?lang=th](http://www2.airportthai.co.th/airportnew/bangkok/index.asp?lang=th)

domestic flights remains. Don Muang airport is now the second major airport of the country after Suvarnabhumi airport.

#### **4.2.3 Southern bus terminal**

The reason why Southern bus terminal was chosen is because I wanted to make a comparison between signs aimed at foreign tourists and those aimed at local passengers, as the main groups of passengers who use buses and coaches for travelling are Thai people. The bus terminal itself is quite different from the terminals of the other data collection sites, as two-thirds of the passenger terminal is divided into a shopping plaza which is surrounded by clothing shops, drugstores, and restaurants. Despite attempts, I still cannot find any statistical report on passengers at this location provided either online or from the bus terminal itself. Based on my 3-day observation, there should be around 1,500 to 2,000 passengers per day. However, I saw only a few foreign backpackers (less than 10 passengers) every day of my visit. In general, Thai people use buses to go to other cities, as bus fares are about 10-20 times cheaper than airfares. There are three main bus stations in Bangkok, namely 1) Mo Chit: Northern and North-eastern bus terminal, 2) Barommaratchachonnani: Southern bus terminal, and 3) Ekamai: Eastern bus terminal. Barommaratchachonnani: Southern bus terminal is the second largest bus terminal in terms of passengers after Mo Chi: Northern and North-eastern bus terminal.

This section presents how data were collected and gives information regarding the data collection locations. The following section discusses how data were grouped into categories.

## 4.3 Categorising the data

This section presents the information about 1) what counts as a sign in this research project, and 2) categories of signs.

### 4.3.1 Signs

The data that are referred to as a sign or signs in this research cover all shop signs (see Figure 4.3.1.1), office signs (see Figure 4.3.1.2), counter signs (see Figure 4.3.1.3), direction signs (see Figure 4.3.1.4), billboards (see Figure 4.3.1.5), stickers (Figure 4.3.1.6), and road signs outside the passenger terminals (see Figure 4.3.1.7).

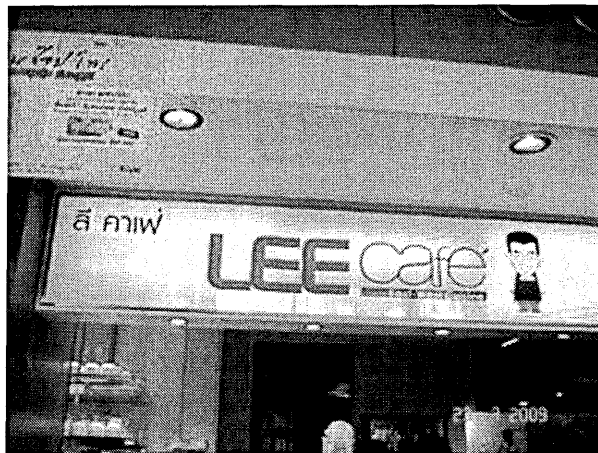


Figure 4.3.1.1: an example of a shop sign



Figure 4.3.1.2: an example of an office sign



Figure 4.3.1.3: an example of a counter sign

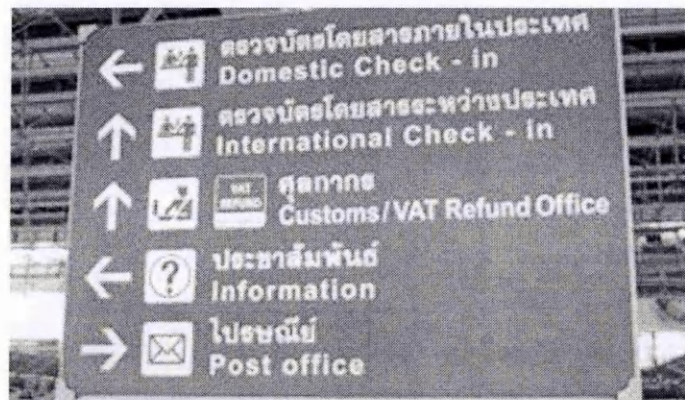


Figure 4.3.1.4: an example of a direction sign



Figure 4.3.1.5: an example of a billboard



Figure 4.3.1.6: an example of a sticker

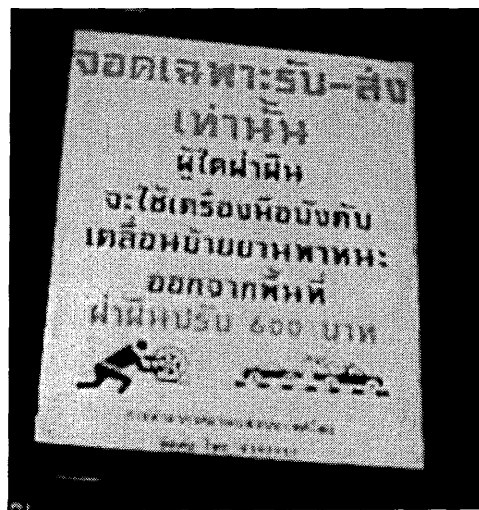


Figure 4.3.1.7: an example of a road sign

The data were quantitatively categorised based on 1) the sense of ownership namely official and commercial, 2) the purpose of use namely information and advertising, and 3) the languages they display namely monolingual, bilingual, trilingual and multilingual.

#### 4.3.2 Official vs. commercial

The data were divided by the sense of ownership into official and commercial to see which is the dominant language on the sign owned by each group. ‘Official’ signs refer to the signs that

- are issued by the airport and the bus terminal authorities
- belong to Suvarnabhumi airport, Don Muang airport and the bus terminal

As mentioned in Section 1.5, the airports and the bus terminal do not rely on the sale volumes of products or services. Therefore, the languages display on the ‘official’ signs should mainly available in two languages –Thai and English. The signs that belong to data collections sites are mainly direction signs (see Figure 4.3.1.4).

‘Commercial’ signs refer to the signs that

- are issued by private authorities, such as airline officers, shop owners and companies
- belong to the airlines, private shops, private restaurants, private authorities, and businesses

Commercial signs mainly display various languages on the signs and some signs belong to foreign companies that have headquarters in other countries. Commercial signs come in forms of both giving information (Figure 4.3.2.1) and selling products and services (Figure 4.3.2.2).

Fare	Y	B	M	L	Y	B	M	L
Yokohama	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Yokohama	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
Yokohama	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Yokohama	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

Figure 4.3.2.1: an example of a commercial sign (giving information)



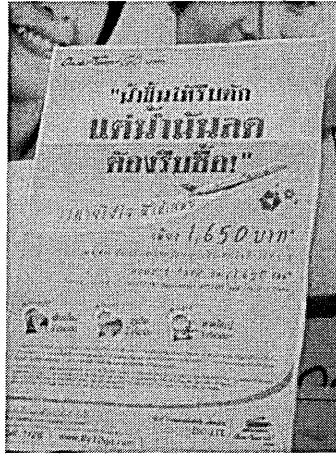


Figure 4.3.2.2: an example of commercial sign (selling products)

### 4.3.3 Information vs. advertising

‘Information’ signs refer to the signs that give information to audience. The messages on the signs do not intend to advertise any product or service. In general, an information sign can belong to both official group (see Figure 4.3.3.1) and commercial group (see Figure 4.3.3.2), because the airports and the bus terminal provide mainly signs showing directions only. If any airline needs to give further detailed information, such as about check-in, luggage allowance, and the airline office location, the airline has to make it own signs.



Figure 4.3.3.1: an example of a sign for information (official)



Figure 4.3.3.2: an example of a sign for information (commercial)

‘Advertising’ signs refer to all signs that are aimed at selling products and offering services to audience (see Figure 4.3.3.3). Chiefly, advertising signs in this project belong to the commercial group. In this research, there are only 3 advertising signs that belong to the official group (see Figure 4.3.3.4).



Figure 4.3.3.3: an example of a sign for advertising



Figure 4.3.3.4: an advertising sign that belongs to the official group

However, during the process of data categorisation, there were some signs that serve both advertising and informative purposes. Hence, these signs are labelled as ‘both’ (see Figure 4.3.3.5).



Figure 4.3.3.5: an example of a sign that serves both purposes

#### 4.3.4 Monolingual, bilingual, trilingual, multilingual

The purpose of categorising the signs based on the languages they display into, namely monolingual, bilingual, trilingual and multilingual was done to answer the research

questions about the role that English plays in the linguistic landscape of Thailand and how the role varies according to contexts. According to Smalley (1994: 55), there are two main languages used in Thailand that are Standard Thai and Standard English. Hence, English and Thai should be the main languages displayed on the official signs, and other foreign languages should be found more often in the commercial group.

In this project, monolingual signs refer to all signs that have just only one language available (see Figure 4.3.4.1 and Figure 4.3.4.2)

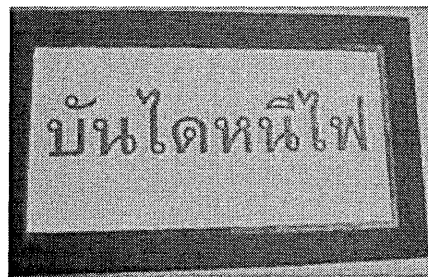


Figure 4.3.4.1: an example of a monolingual Thai sign



Figure 4.3.4.2: an example of a monolingual English sign

Bilingual signs refer to the signs that display two languages. Under this group, the data are subdivided into the groups of signs that have Thai messages above English (Thai-English) (see Figure 4.3.4.3) and have English above Thai (English-Thai) (see Figure 4.3.4.4)

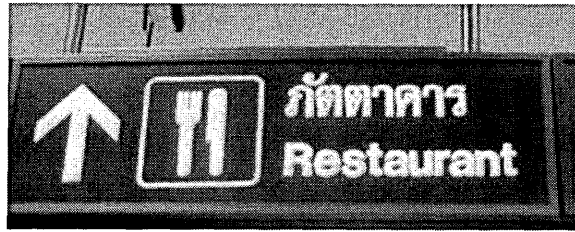


Figure 4.3.4.3: an example of a bilingual Thai-English sign



Figure 4.3.4.4: an example of a bilingual English-Thai sign

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1990: 2) analyse that visual designs by means of layout has an impact on viewers. Based on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1990) statement along with my observation, in the groups of bilingual English-Thai or Thai-English signs, a Thai message appears to be placed above an English message in the group of official signs. In the same way, an English message is generally placed above a Thai message in the group of commercial signs. It might be concluded that official signs give priority to the Thai language. That is why the Thai language is placed above the English language. Similarly, commercial signs should give priority to English, as the language is frequently placed above Thai. In addition, some signs that display more English messages than Thai messages should be aimed at foreigners. In the same way, those that display more Thai messages than English ones might be targeted at Thai people. Hence, under the bilingual group, it is subdivided into the groups of Thai dominant signs and English dominant signs. Thai dominant bilingual signs refer to the signs that display more Thai messages than English (see Figure 4.3.4.5). A sign in this group is placed under the group of bilingual Thai-English signs. English dominant bilingual signs display mainly English messages

(see Figure 4.3.4.6). A sign in this subcategory is grouped into the group of English-Thai signs.



Figure 4.3.4.5: an example of a Thai dominant bilingual sign (with some English words)

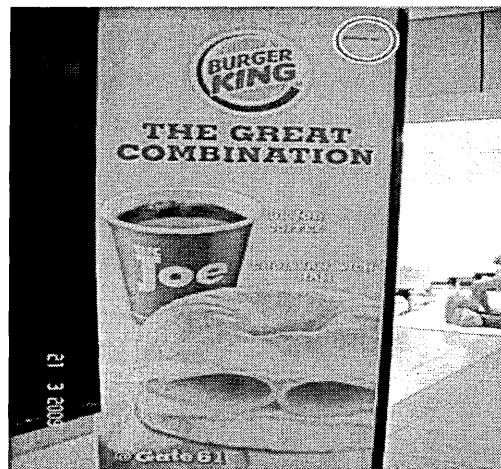


Figure 4.3.4.6: an example of an English dominant bilingual sign  
(with some Thai words on the top corner)

There is also another group of bilingual items that contain two languages such as Thai-Chinese, English-Chinese, and English-Arabic.

Trilingual signs refer to the signs that display three languages (see Figure 4.3.4.7).

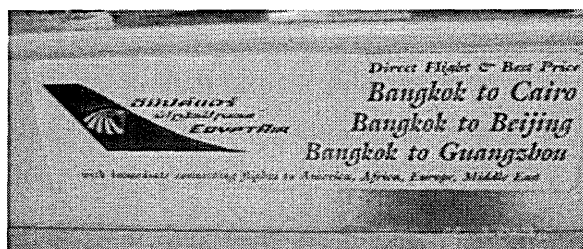


Figure 4.3.4.7: an example of a trilingual sign (English, Arabic, Thai)

Multilingual signs refer to the signs that display more than three languages (see Figure 4.3.4.8).



Figure 4.3.4.8: an example of a multilingual sign  
(English, Japanese, Chinese, French, German)

This chapter has described the process of data collection by explaining why each data collection site was chosen and the amount of data collected from each site. It has also clarified why data were categorised into three groups regarding the sense of ownership, the purpose of use, and the languages displayed. The next chapter presents the results and provides the data analysis.

## **Chapter 5 Interpreting the data**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4: Collecting and coding the data has been shown how data were collected and categorised. This chapter quantitatively presents the research results based on 1) the purpose of use, namely, information and advertising to see the role of a leading language on each type of signs, and 2) the languages that the signs display, namely, monolingual, bilingual, trilingual and multilingual signs to see the role of English as a foreign language on Thai signs. Then the data analysis of the linguistic landscape characteristics of signs in major transport hubs in Thailand under the employment of a broadly sociolinguistic approach and socio-cultural perspectives are qualitatively presented.

### **5.2 Information vs. advertising**

The purpose of dividing the signs into the groups of information and advertising is to test the research hypotheses in section 1.5 that the majority of the official signs should be informative, and the majority of the advertising signs should belong to the commercial group. The results from the three data collection sites are as follows:

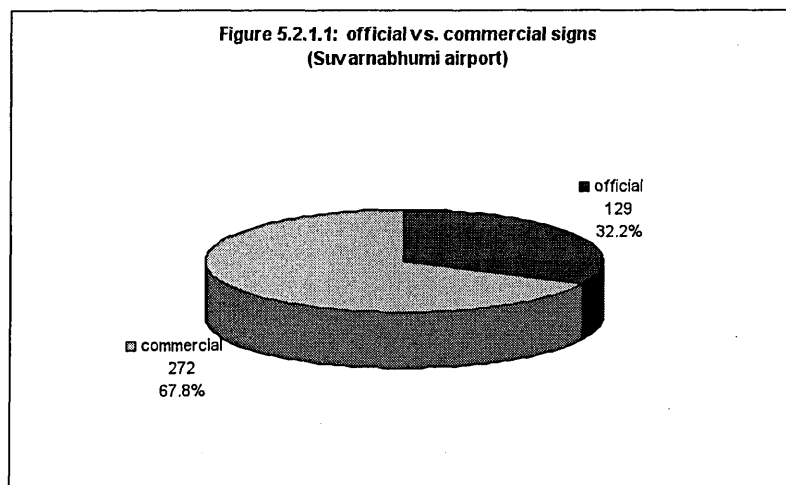


### 5.2.1 Suvarnabhumi airport

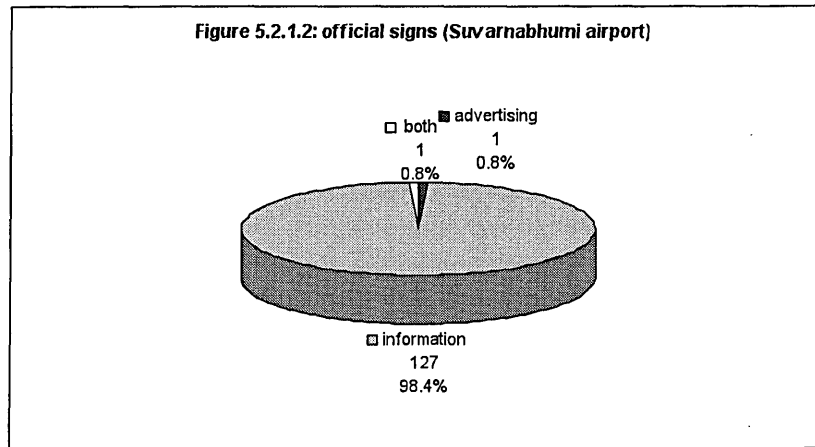
Suvarnabhumi airport			
	official	commercial	<i>Total</i>
advertising	1	41	42
information	127	229	356
both	1	2	3
<i>Total</i>	129	272	401

Table 5.2.1: information vs. advertising (Suvarnabhumi airport)

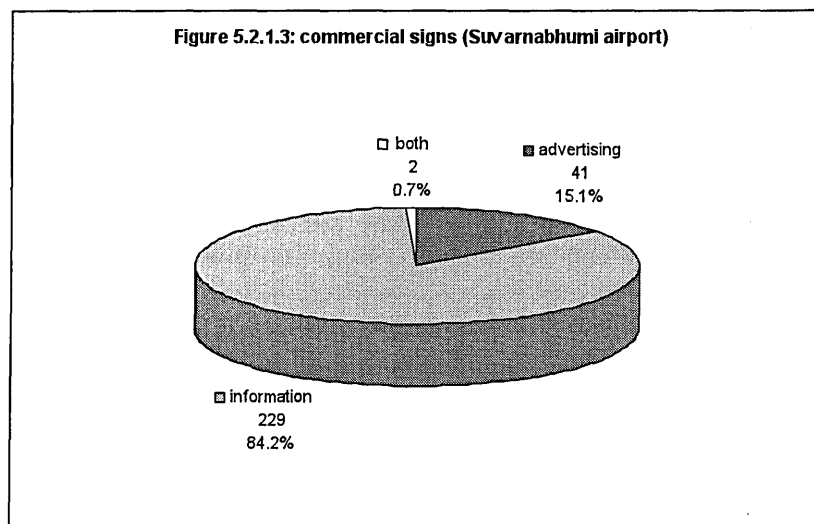
Table 5.2.1 demonstrates that the number of commercial signs doubles the number of official signs.



Based on Figure 5.2.1.1, the chart shows that 67.8% of the signs in general are private and 32.2% of the signs belong to the airport.



Regarding Figure 5.2.1.2, out of 129 official signs, 98.4% of the signs are used for giving information. Only 0.8% or one sign is used for advertising purpose. Also, only 0.8% serves both purposes.



As regards the commercial items, Figure 5.2.1.3 shows that 84.2% of the signs are also informative, while 15.1% of the signs are used for advertising, and 0.7% of the signs serve both purposes.

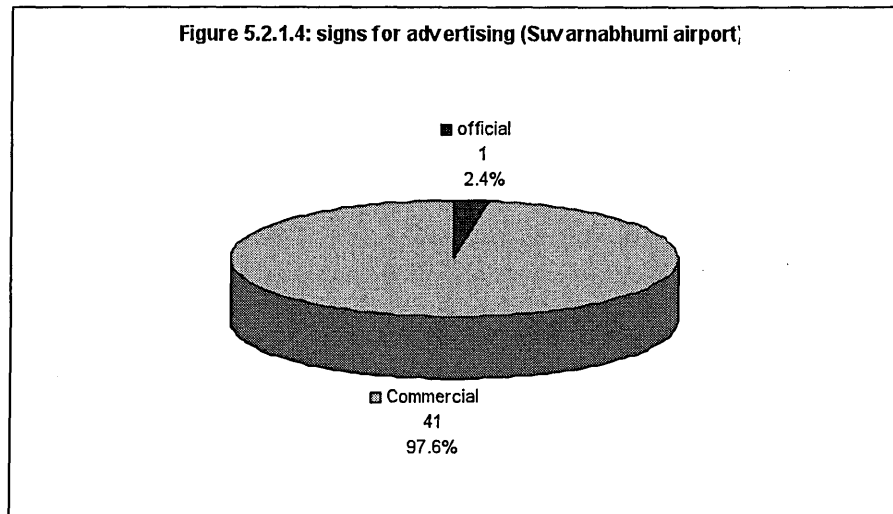


Figure 5.2.1.4 demonstrates that 97.6% of the signs for advertising belong to the commercial group. Only 2.4% belong to the official group.

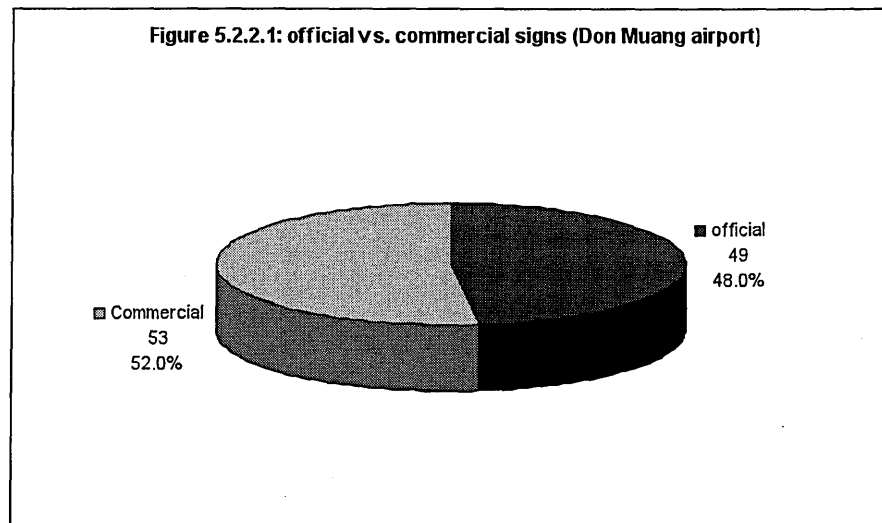
According to the statistics and charts, there are more commercial signs than official signs at Suvarnabhumi airport. Most of the official signs are informative as well as the main group of the commercial signs. However, 97.6% of signs for advertising belong to the commercial group.

### 5.2.2 Don Muang airport

Don Muang airport			
	Official	Commercial	Total
<b>advertising</b>	1	19	20
<b>information</b>	48	31	79
<b>both</b>	0	3	3
<b>Total</b>	49	53	102

Table 5.2.2: information vs. advertising (Don Muang airport)

Based on Table 5.2.2, the statistics show that the numbers of official and commercial signs are relatively similar at Don Muang airport.



According to Figure 5.2.2.1, the official signs account for 48%, while the commercial signs represent 52% of the total signs.

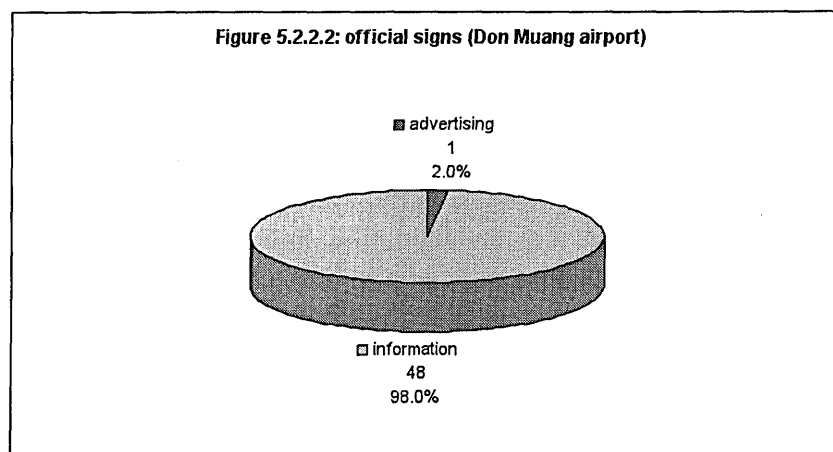


Figure 5.2.2 reveals that 98% of official signs are informative, and only 2% are used for advertising purposes.

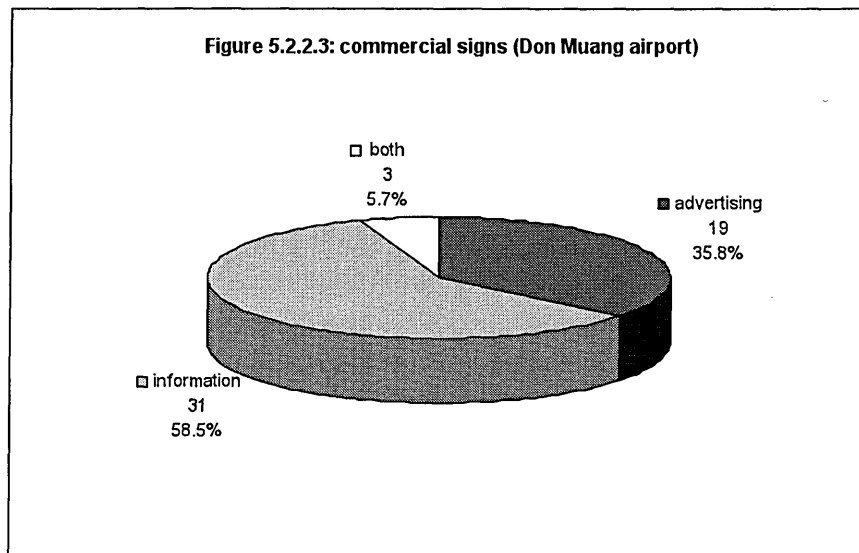
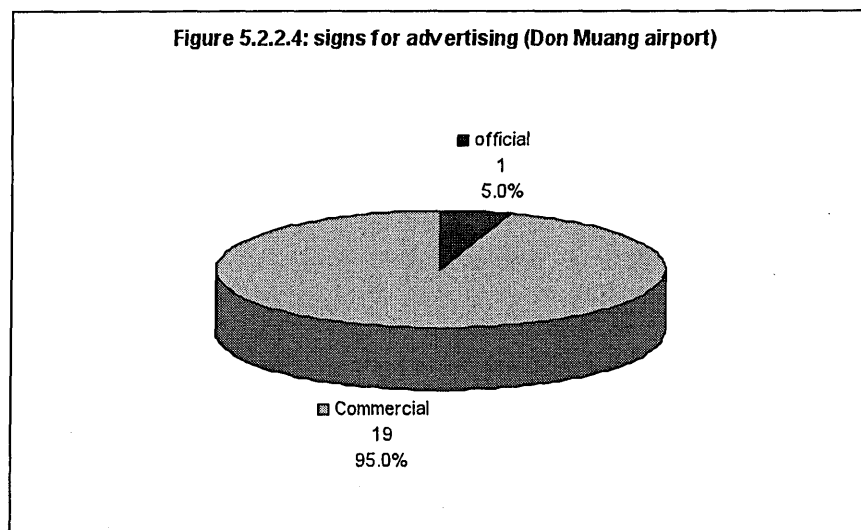


Figure 5.2.2.3 illustrates that 58.5% of commercial signs at this airport are aimed at giving information, while 35.8% of them advertise products or services. Only 5.7% serve both purposes.



Regarding Figure 5.2.2.4, 95% of the signs for advertising belong to the commercial group and only 5% or one sign belongs to the official group.

From Table 5.2.2 and the charts, it can be seen that the numbers of official signs and commercial signs at Don Muang airport are relatively similar. Both official and commercial signs give priority to the informative function of the signs, as they do at

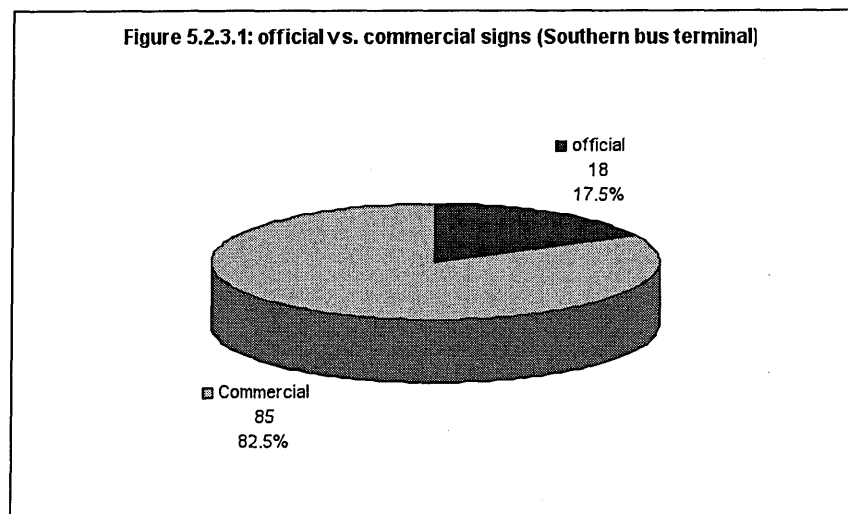
Suvarnabhumi airport. Most of the official signs are informative, and most of the advertising signs belong to the commercial group.

### 5.2.3 Southern bus terminal

Southern bus terminal			
	official	commercial	<i>Total</i>
<b>advertising</b>	0	41	41
<b>information</b>	18	42	60
<b>both</b>	0	2	2
<b><i>Total</i></b>	18	85	103

Table 5.2.3: information vs. advertising (Southern bus terminal)

Table 5.2.3 shows that the number of commercial signs is about 5 times higher than the number of official signs.



Based on Figure 5.2.3.1, 82.5% of the signs as a whole are issued by the commercial group and 17.5% belong to the bus terminal.

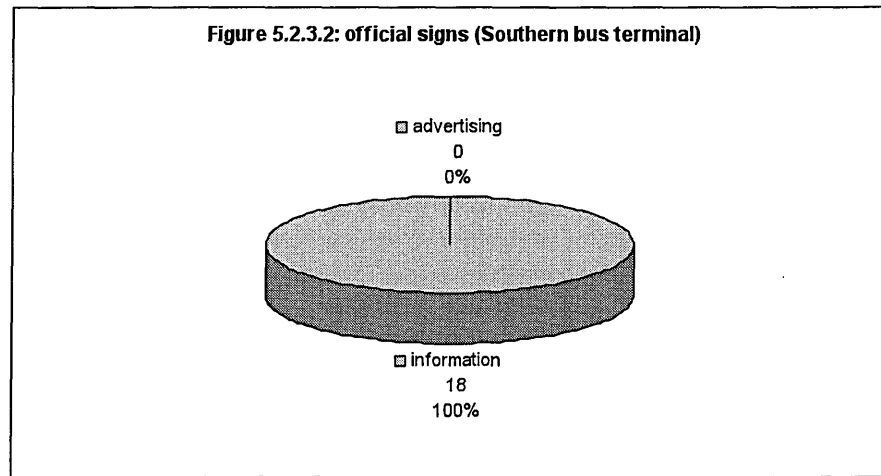
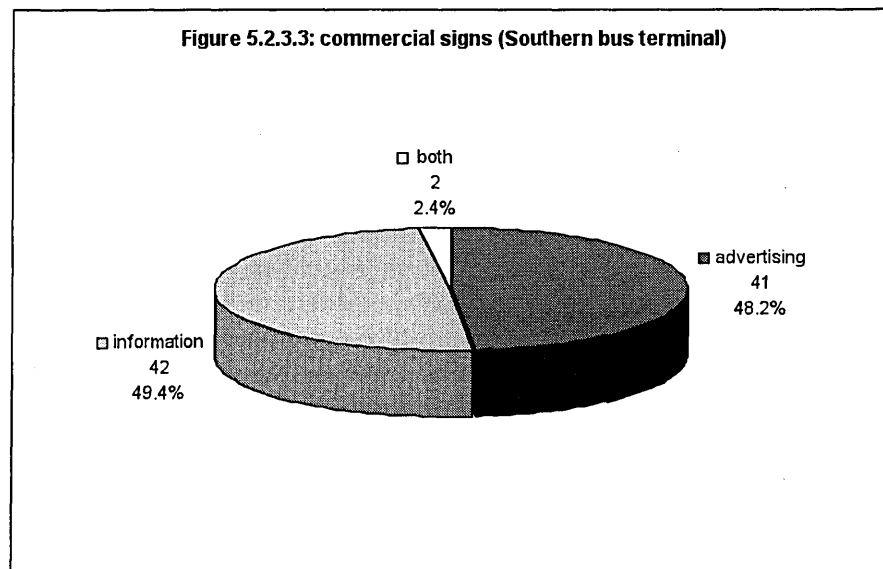


Figure 5.2.3.2 shows an interesting result that 100% of the official signs are informative.



In the case of commercial signs, according to Figure 5.2.3.3, the numbers of signs for information (49.4%) and for advertising (48.2%) are quite similar. Also, 2.4% of the signs serve both purposes.

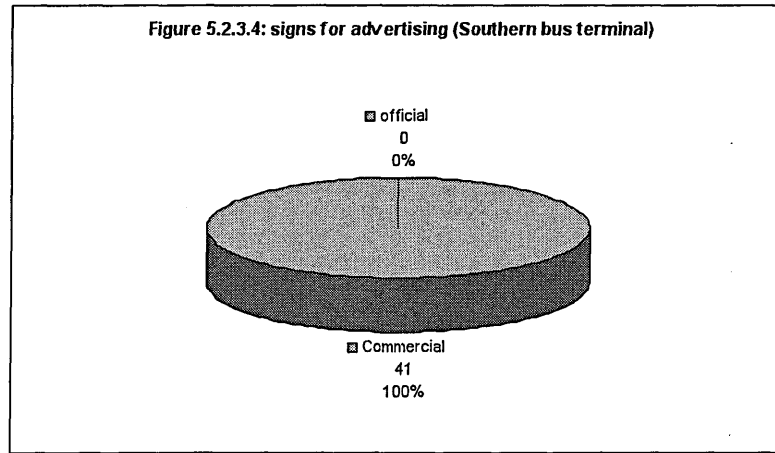


Figure 5.2.3.4 demonstrates that all advertising signs belong to the commercial group.

Based on Table 5.2.3 and the charts, it can be seen that the number of commercial signs is far bigger than the number of official signs at Southern bus terminal. Both official and commercial signs give priority to the informative function of the signs. However, in the group of commercial signs, the number of signs for information is just slightly higher than that of signs for advertising. All of the official signs are informative, and all of the advertising signs belong to the commercial group.

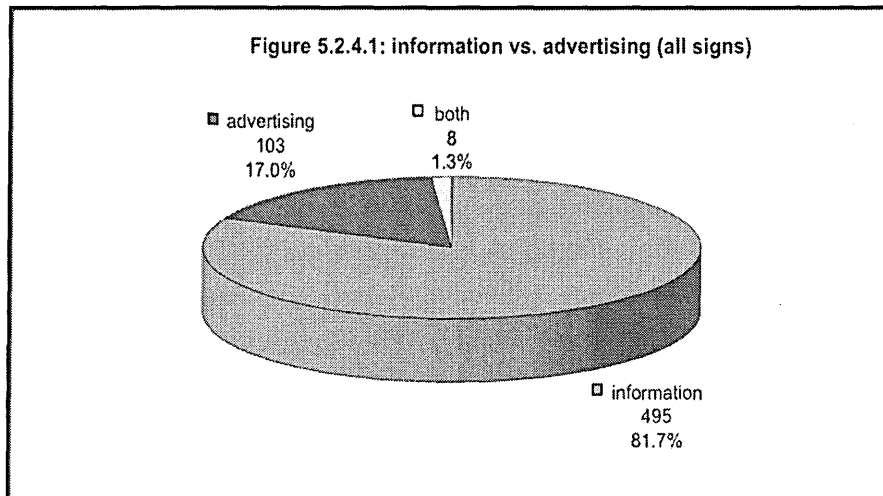
#### 5.2.4 All signs

All signs			
	official	commercial	<i>Total</i>
<b>advertising</b>	2	101	103
<b>information</b>	193	302	495
<b>both</b>	1	7	8
<b><i>Total</i></b>	196	410	606

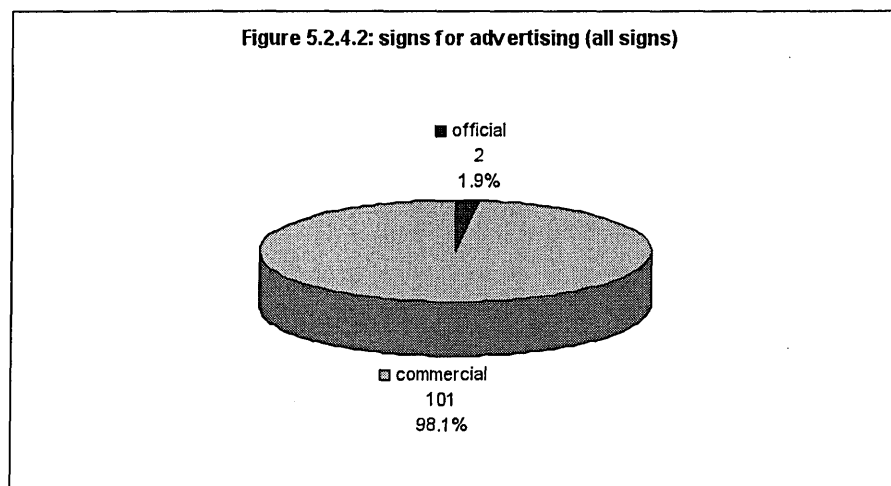
Table 5.2.4: information vs. advertising (all signs)

Table 5.2.4 combines the number of signs from all data collection sites. The table demonstrates that the number of commercial signs (410 signs) double the number of official signs (196 signs).





As regards Figure 5.2.4.1, the statistics show that 81.7% of all signs are used for giving information, and 17% of the signs are for advertising. Also, 1.3% or 8 signs serve both purposes.



Based on Figure 5.2.4.2, 98.1% of all advertising signs belong to the commercial group. Only 1.9% of the signs are issued by the official group.

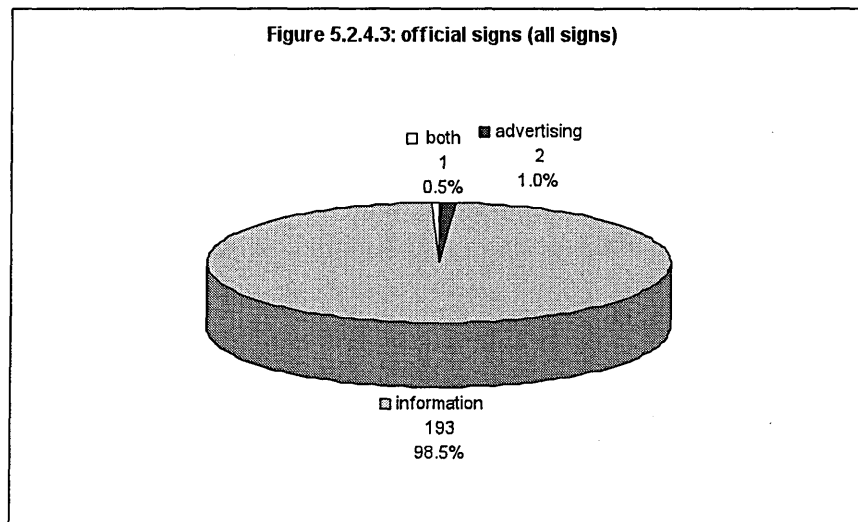


Figure 5.2.4.3 demonstrates that 98.5% of the official signs are informative. Only 1% is used for advertising. Similarly, one percent of the signs serves both functions.

According to the results in this section, the hypothesis that the majority of official signs in this research should be informative, because the public transport hubs do not depend on sales volumes of products or services are justified. In the same way, most of the advertising signs belong to the commercial groups, because private businesses such as airlines, shops and restaurants rely on customers. This result has a link with part of marketing strategies that using signs is another channel to attract customers.

### **5.3 Monolingual signs, bilingual signs, trilingual signs, and multilingual signs**

The purpose of dividing the signs into the groups of monolingual, bilingual, trilingual and multilingual signs is to answer the research questions in section 1.5 about the role that English plays in the linguistic landscape in major transport hubs Thailand and how the role varies according to contexts. In addition, the results are also expected to be used to test one of the research hypotheses that the presence of English on the signs should be associated with the number of foreigners and intended target audience at each data

collection site. Moreover, Smalley (1994: 55) claims that there are two main languages used in Thailand that are Standard Thai and Standard English. Therefore, official signs, which mainly are informative, should display mainly two languages – Thai and English. Commercial signs should display more languages than official signs, according to different purposes they serve. The results from the three data collection sites are shown as follows:

### 5.3.1 Suvarnabhumi airport

Suvarnabhumi airport															
Monolingual				Bilingual						Trilingual			Multi		To.
T	E	A	Thai and English		English and another language				T+ E+ J	T+ E+ A	T+ E+ C	E+J+ C+F +G	Ko +E+ J+C		
			T+E	E+T	E+A	E+C	E+J	E+H							
O	6	21	0	85	11	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Co.	11	117	1	45	54	11	16	7	1	4	3	3	2	1	276
	17	138	1	130	65	11	17	8	1	4	3	3	2	1	
				195		37									
To.	156			232						10			3		401

Table 5.3.1: languages displayed on the signs (Suvarnabhumi airport)

O = Official, Co. = Commercial, To. = Total, Multi = Multilingual

T = Thai, E = English, A = Arabic

C = Chinese, J = Japanese, H = Hindi

F = French, G = German, Ko = Korean

Table 5.3.1 shows the information about all languages displayed on the signs at Suvarnabhumi airport. It can be seen that the number of bilingual-Thai-and-English signs is higher than other groups of signs. Regarding Figure 5.2.1.1 in the previous section, at

Suvarnabhumi airport, commercial signs account for 67.8%, and official signs account for 32.2% of all signs.

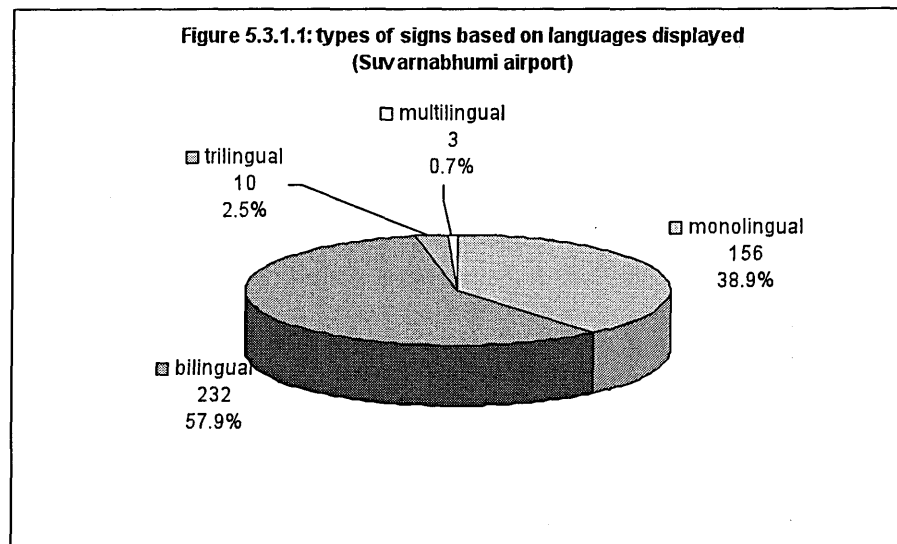


Figure 5.3.1.1 illustrates that 57.9% of the signs are bilingual and 38.9% of the signs are monolingual. Only 2.5% of the sign display three languages. There are only 3 signs or 0.7% are multilingual.

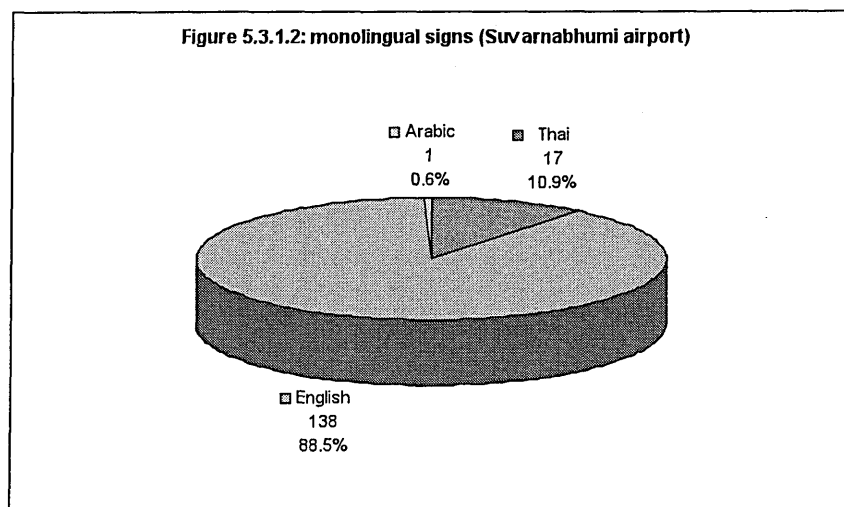
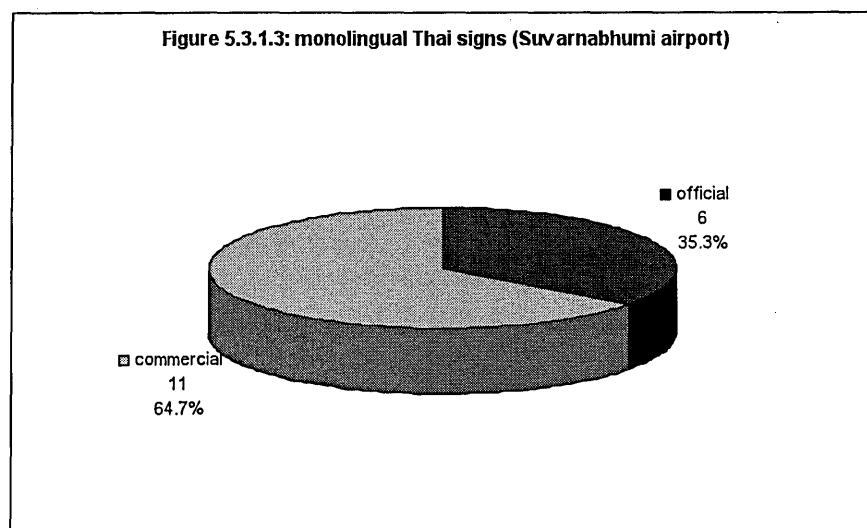


Figure 5.3.1.2 demonstrates that 88.5% of the monolingual signs are in English. Only 10.9% are in Thai. There is one monolingual Arabic sign (0.6%) which is a Halal sign at a bakery shop (see Figure 5.3.1.2.1)



Figure 5.3.1.2.1: a Halal sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Based on Figure 5.3.1.3, 35.3% of monolingual Thai signs belong to the official group, and 64.7% of the signs are owned by the commercial group.

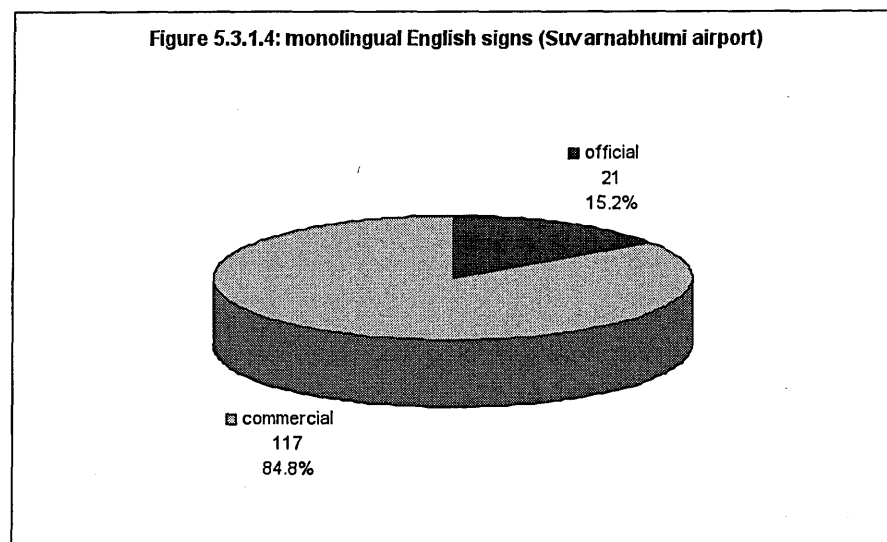


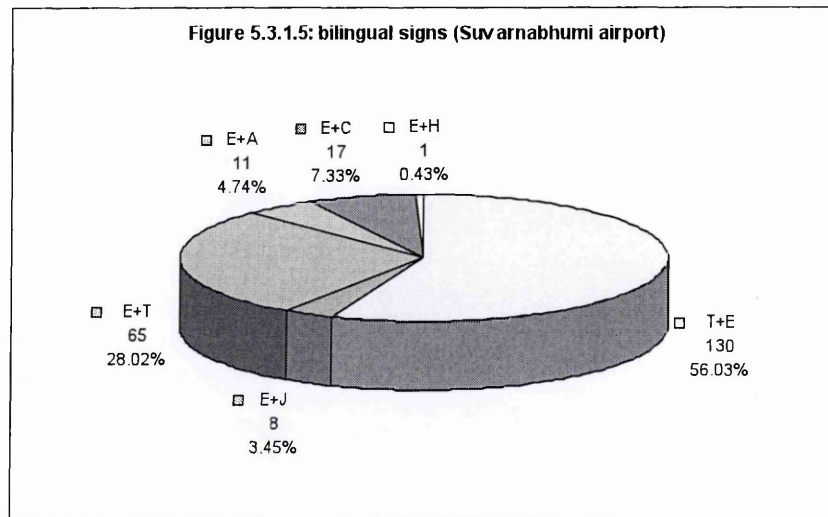
Figure 5.3.1.4 demonstrates that 84.8% of monolingual English signs belong to the commercial group. However, some monolingual English signs have a link with monolingual Thai signs, because they are produced in both languages – Thai and English (see Figure 5.3.1.4.1 and Figure 5.3.1.4.2).



Figure 5.3.1.4.1 a monolingual Thai sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Figure 5.3.1.4.2 a monolingual English sign (parallel version) (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Under the group of bilingual signs, Figure 5.3.1.5 reveals that the group of Thai-English signs is the biggest group (56.03%). The other foreign languages found on the signs are Chinese (see Figure 5.3.1.5.1), Japanese (see Figure 5.3.1.5.2), Arabic (see Figure 5.3.1.5.3), and Hindi (see Figure 5.3.1.5.4).



Figure 5.3.1.5.1: a bilingual English-Chinese sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



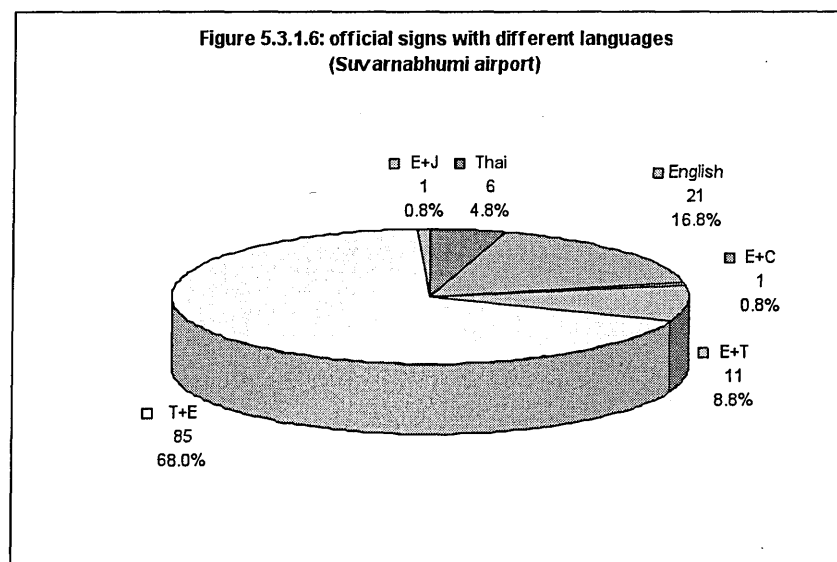
Figure 5.3.1.5.2: a bilingual English-Japanese sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Figure 5.3.1.5.3: a bilingual English-Arabic sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Figure 5.3.1.5.4: a bilingual English-Hindi sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Regarding official signs, Figure 5.3.1.6 illustrates that 98.4% of the signs display only two languages either Thai or English or both. The group of bilingual Thai-English signs is accounted for the biggest group of all official signs. There are only two official signs that display other foreign languages, namely, Japanese (see Figure 5.3.1.6.1) and Chinese (see



Figure 5.3.1.6.2). There is no trilingual or multilingual signs that belong to the official group at Suvarnabhumi airport.

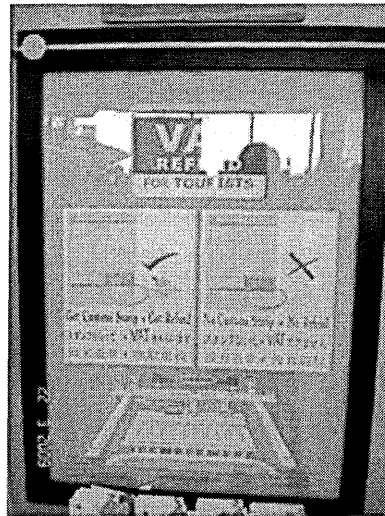
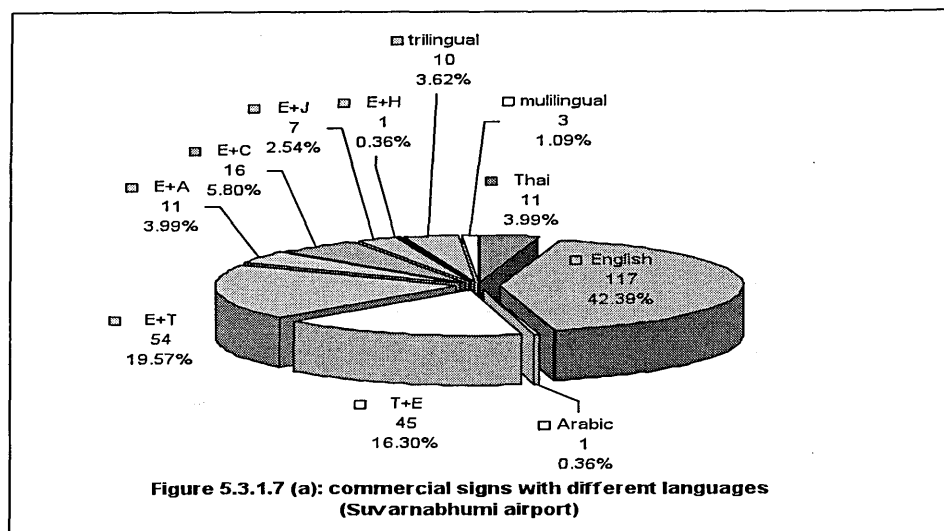
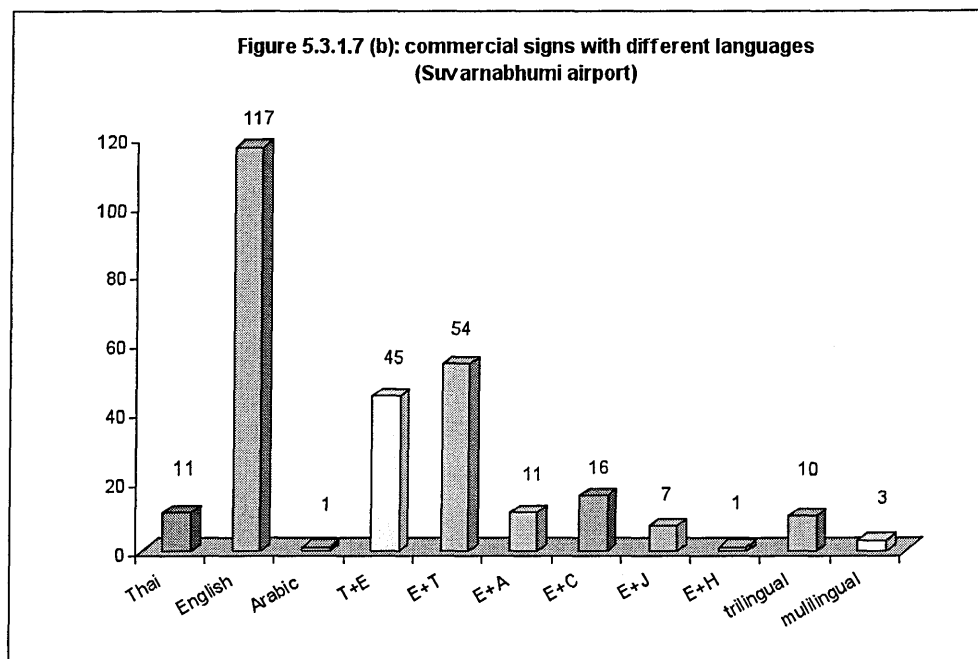


Figure 5.3.1.6.1: a bilingual English-Japanese official sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Figure 5.3.1.6.2: a bilingual English-Chinese official sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)





Under the group of commercial signs, Figure 5.3.1.7 (a) and 5.3.1.7 (b) reveal that the group of monolingual English signs is accounted for the biggest group. Apart from English and Thai languages, commercial signs display other languages, namely, Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, German, Hindi, Japanese, and Russian. In terms of bilingual signs, the number of English-Thai signs is bigger than the group of Thai-English signs. Regarding the trilingual signs, both Thai and English are included in the 10 signs (see Figure 4.3.4.7). On the other hand, the three multilingual signs display no Thai language at all. Two-thirds of the multilingual signs, which are signs of the telephone companies giving instructions on how to make an international call. Apart from English, the signs include French and German, Chinese and Japanese (see Figure 4.3.4.8).

At Suvarnabhumi airport, English plays a dominant role as a foreign language and has a more significant role than Thai. Based on Table 5.3.1, 383 signs contain the English language, while 212 signs display/ include the Thai language. Thai and English are the most frequently found languages on the official signs. There are other foreign languages frequently found on commercial signs, namely, Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, German, Hindi, Japanese, Russian and Turkish. However, their roles cannot compete with English.

### 5.3.2 Don Muang airport

Don Muang airport									
	Monolingual		Bilingual				Trilingual	Multilingual	Total
	T	E	T and E		others		T+E+C	T+E+J+C	
			T+E	E+T	T+C	E+G			
O	7	2	47	1	0	0	0	1	58
Co.	6	15	10	10	1	1	1	0	44
	13	17	57	11	1	1	1	1	
To.	30		70				1	1	102

Table 5.3.2: languages displayed on the signs (Don Muang airport)

O = Official, Co. = Commercial, To. = Total

T = Thai, E = English, C = Chinese,

G = German, J = Japanese

Table 5.3.2 shows the information about all languages displayed on the signs at Don Muang airport. It can be seen that the number of bilingual-Thai-and-English signs is higher than any other group. Regarding Figure 5.2.2.1 in the previous section, at Don Muang airport, the numbers of commercial signs (52%) and official signs (48%) are relatively similar.

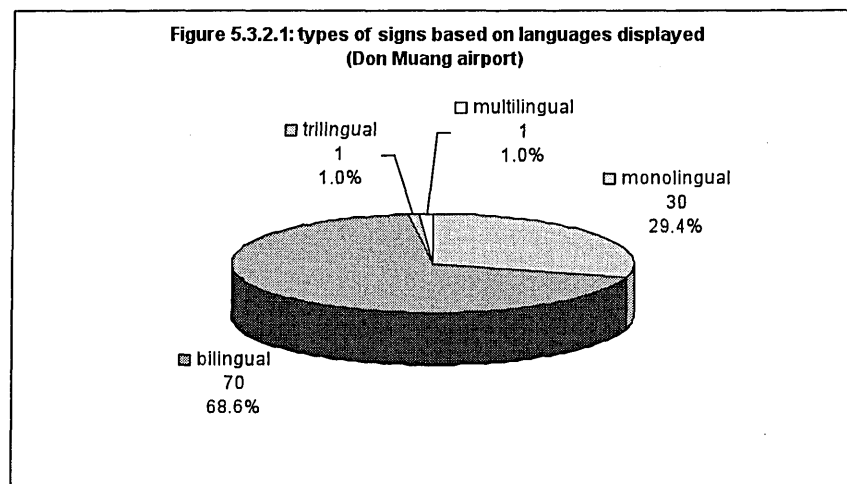


Figure 5.3.2.1 shows that the number of bilingual signs is more numerous than any other group of signs. This is the same as the number of bilingual signs at Suvarnabhumi airport (see Figure 5.3.1.1). Bilingual signs are accounted for 68.6%, while the number of monolingual signs is 29.4%. There is only one percent of trilingual sign. Also, there is only one percent of multilingual sign.

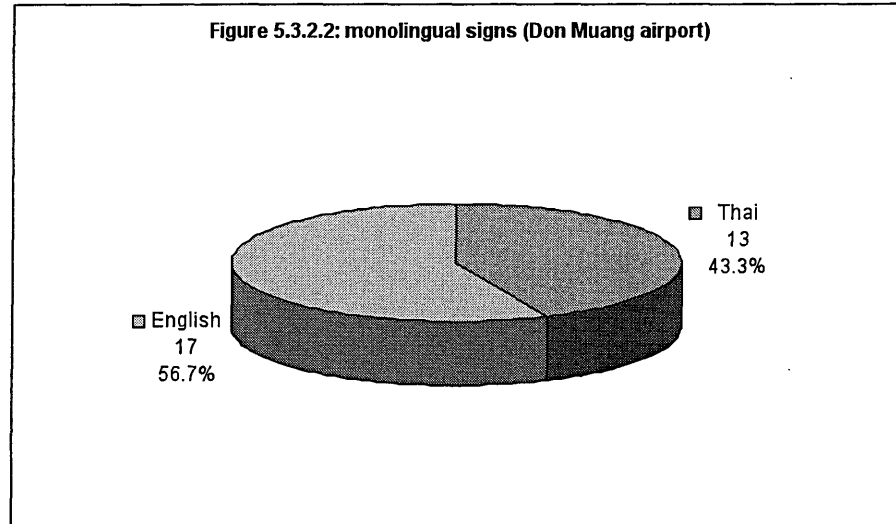


Figure 5.3.2.2 reveals that there are more monolingual English signs (56.7%) than monolingual Thai signs (43.3%). However, the numbers of them are relatively similar.

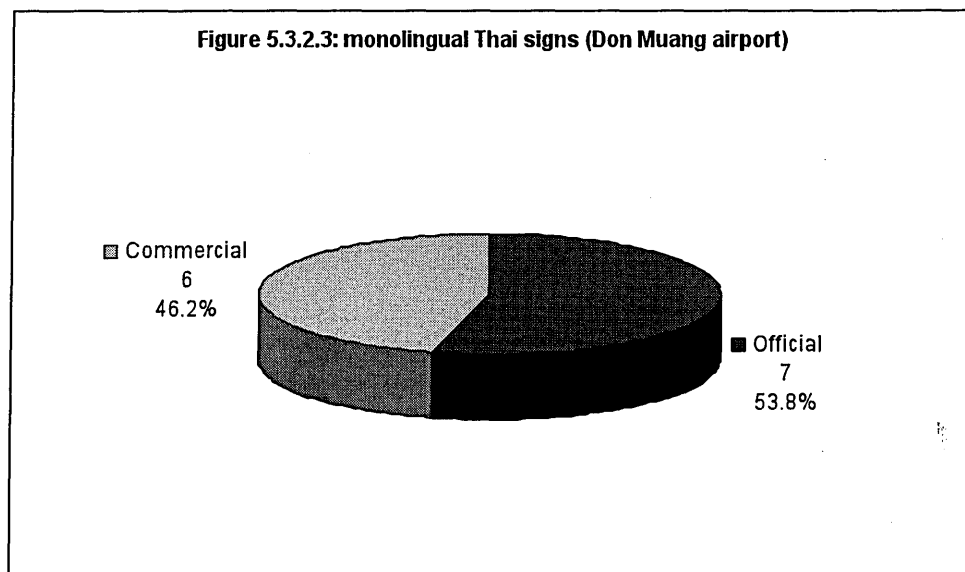
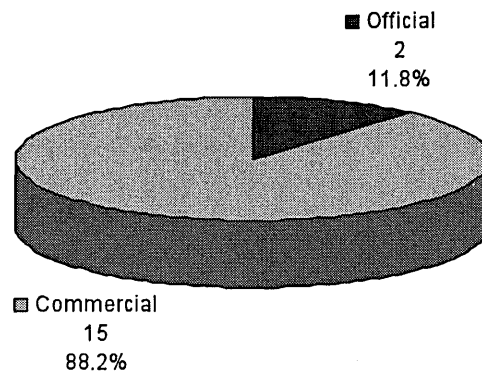


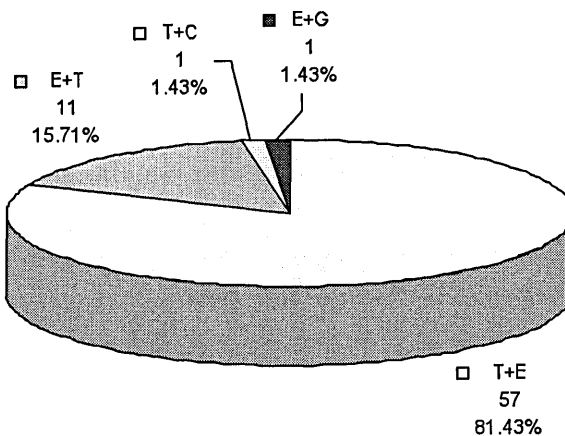
Figure 5.3.2.3 demonstrates that the number of monolingual Thai official signs (53.8%) is slightly higher than the number of monolingual Thai commercial signs (46.2%).

**Figure 5.3.2.4: monolingual English signs (Don Muang airport)**



In the case of monolingual English signs, Figure 5.3.2.4 shows that 88.2% of the signs belong to the commercial group, while 11.8% belong to the official group.

**Figure 5.3.2.5: bilingual signs (Don Muang airport)**



According to Figure 5.3.2.5, the group of bilingual Thai-English signs (81.43%) is accounted for the biggest group, while the group of English-Thai signs (15.71%) comes in the second place. There is one commercial sign that displays Thai and Chinese (see Figure 5.3.2.5.1).



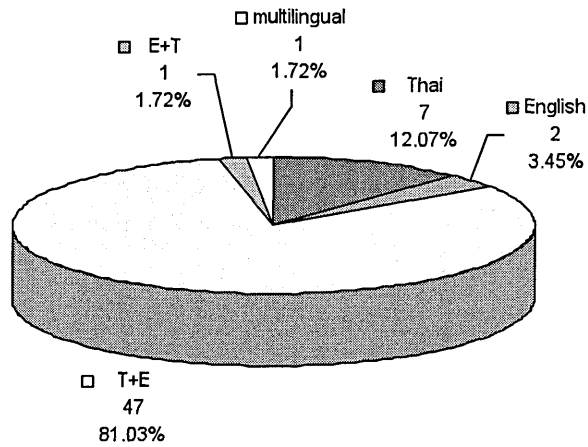
Figure 5.3.2.5.1: a bilingual Thai-Chinese sign (Don Muang airport)

In the case of the English and German sign (see Figure 5.3.2.5.2), I tried to find the information about the original language of this word. Despite my attempts, I could not find any. As the company headquarter is situated in Zurich, Switzerland, where German is used as the main official language, I decided to categorise this sign as an commercial English-German sign.



Figure 5.3.2.5.2: a bilingual English-German sign (Don Muang airport)

Figure 5.3.2.6: official signs with different languages (Don Muang airport)



Under the group of official signs, apart from Japanese and Chinese on the multilingual sign, Thai and English are the only two languages found on the official signs. The multilingual sign, which is located outside the passenger terminal, displays four languages, namely, Thai, English, Japanese, and Chinese (see Figure 5.3.2.6.1).

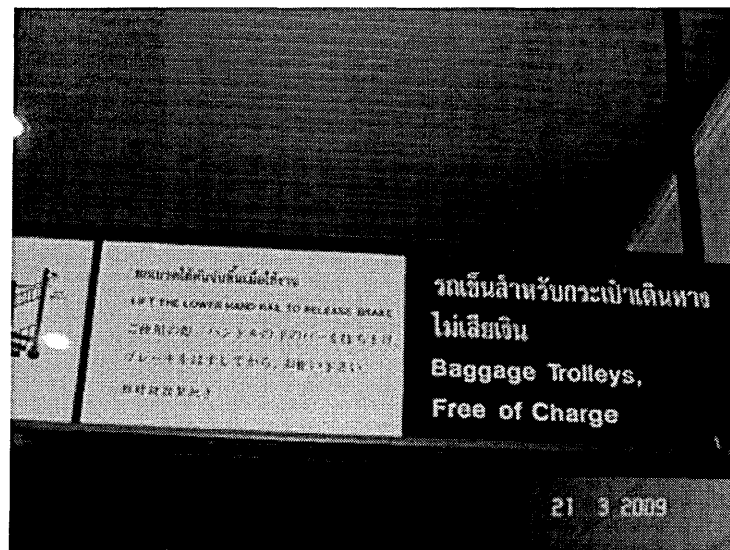
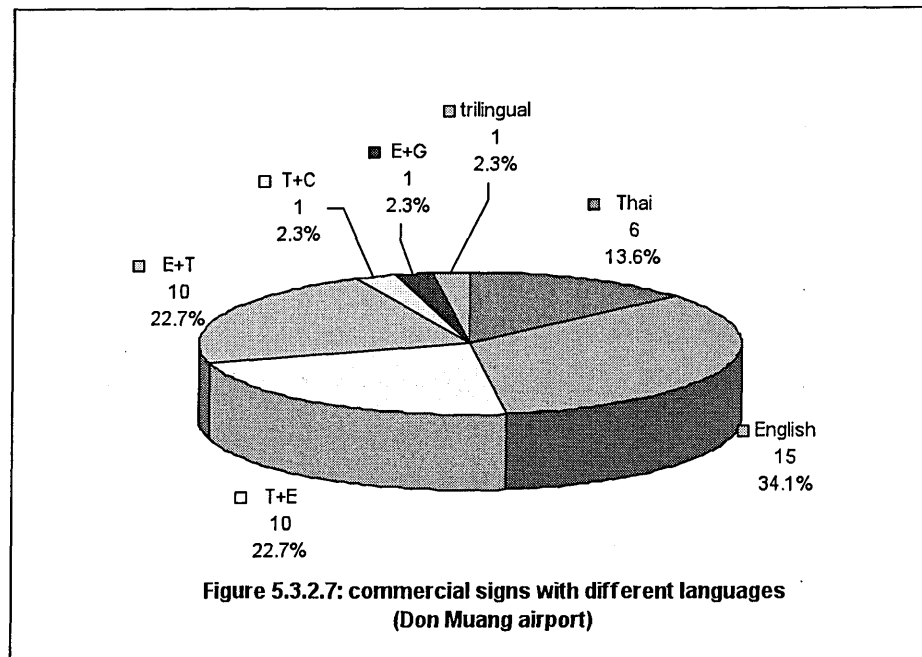


Figure 5.3.2.6.1: a multilingual sign (Don Muang airport)



Regarding commercial signs, the group of monolingual English signs is still the biggest group, as it is at Suvarnabhumi airport. There is one trilingual sign that belongs to a restaurant (see Figure 5.3.2.7.1), but there is no multilingual sign.



Figure 5.3.2.7.1: a trilingual (English, Thai, Chinese) sign (Don Muang airport)

As regards Figure 5.2.2.1 in the previous section, the number of official signs is more than that of commercial signs. The commercial signs at Don Muang airport mainly belong to shops and restaurants in the terminal instead of belonging to the airlines as at



Suvarnabhumi airport. English is still a dominant foreign language, but the role of English is just slightly greater than the role of Thai. Based on Table 5.3.2, 88 signs contain the English language, while 86 signs display the Thai language. Thai and English are the most frequently found languages on the official signs. There are other foreign languages found at this data collection site, namely, Chinese, Japanese and German. However, these languages do not play any significant role.

### 5.3.3 Southern bus terminal

Southern bus terminal								
	Monolingual		Bilingual			Trilingual		Total
	T	E	T & E		T+A	T+E+J	T+E+C	
			T+E	E+T				
Official	5	1	10	10	0	0	0	16
Commercial	31	3	40	9	1	2	1	87
	36	4	40	19	1	2	1	
Total signs	40		60			3		103

Table 5.3.3: languages displayed on the signs (Southern bus terminal)

T = Thai, E = English, A = Arabic, J = Japanese, C =Chinese

Table 5.3.3 shows the information about all languages displayed on the signs at Southern bus terminal. It can be seen that the numbers of bilingual Thai-English signs and monolingual Thai signs are relatively similar. Regarding Figure 5.2.3.1, in the previous section, at Southern bus terminal, commercial signs account for 82.5%, and official signs account for 17.5% of the total signs. The reason why the number of commercial signs is far greater than that of official signs should be because two-thirds of the terminal building is used as a shopping plaza.

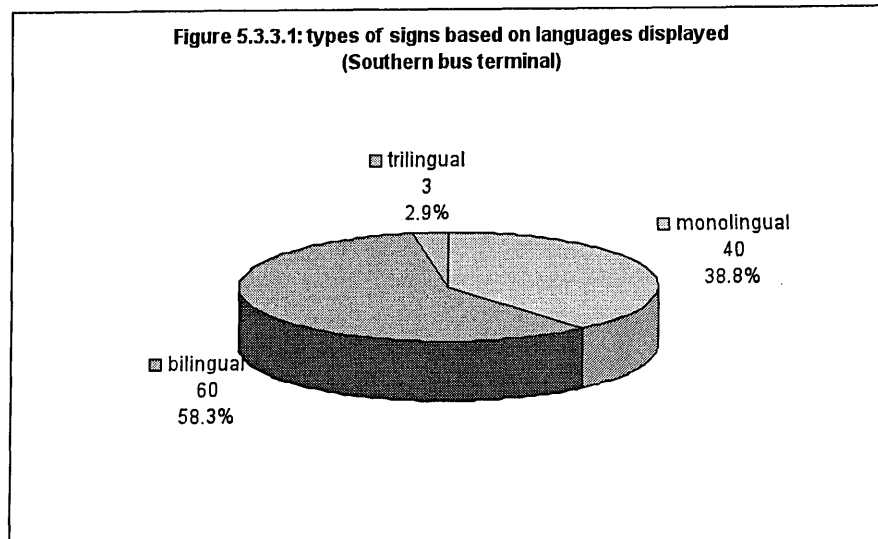


Figure 5.3.3.1 shows that the group of bilingual signs (58.3%) is still the dominant group at this site, as it is at Suvarnabhumi airport and Don Muang airport. Forty signs (38.8%) are monolingual. There are 3 bilingual signs. However, there is no multilingual sign at the bus terminal.

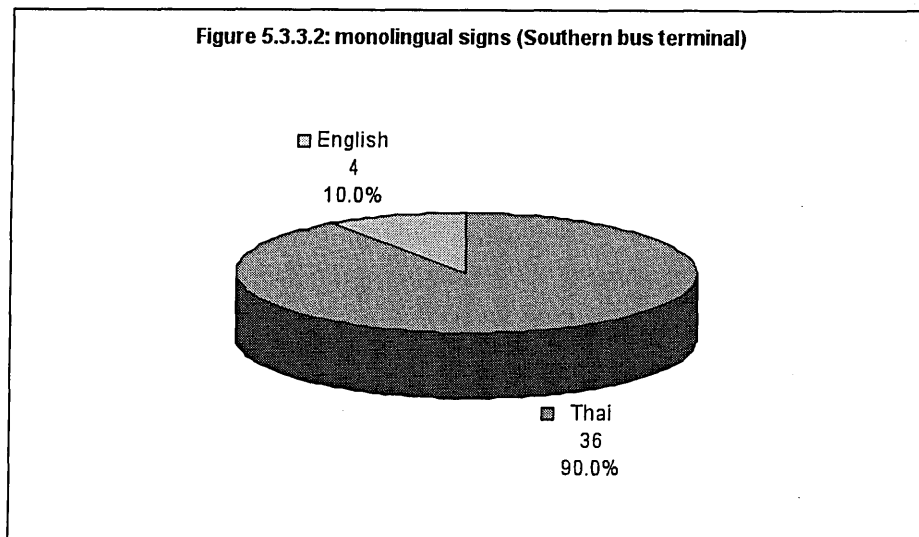


Figure 5.3.3.2 reveals that there are only 10% of monolingual English signs, while 90% of the monolingual signs are Thai. In comparison to the other two sites, at Suvarnabhumi airport, 88.5% of the monolingual signs display the English language (see Figure 5.3.1.2). At Don Muang airport, there are 56.7% of monolingual English signs (see Figure 5.3.2.2).

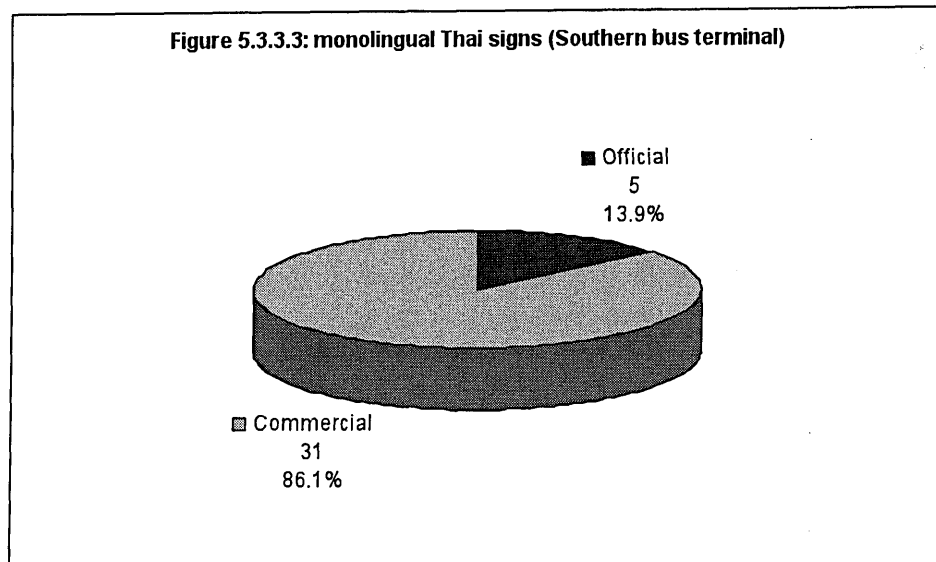


Figure 5.3.3.3 illustrates that 86.1% of monolingual Thai signs belong to the official group, while 13.9% of this type of signs are owned by the commercial group.

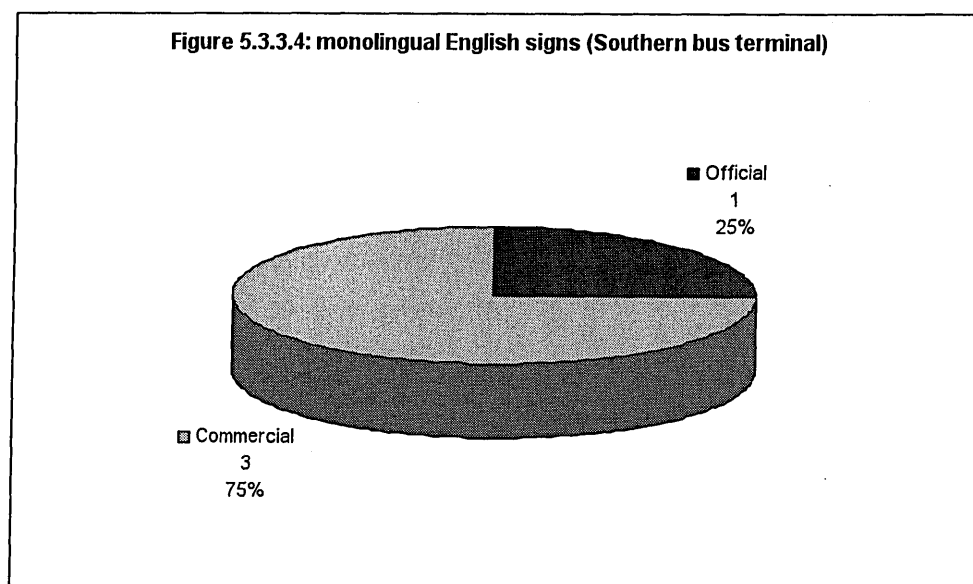
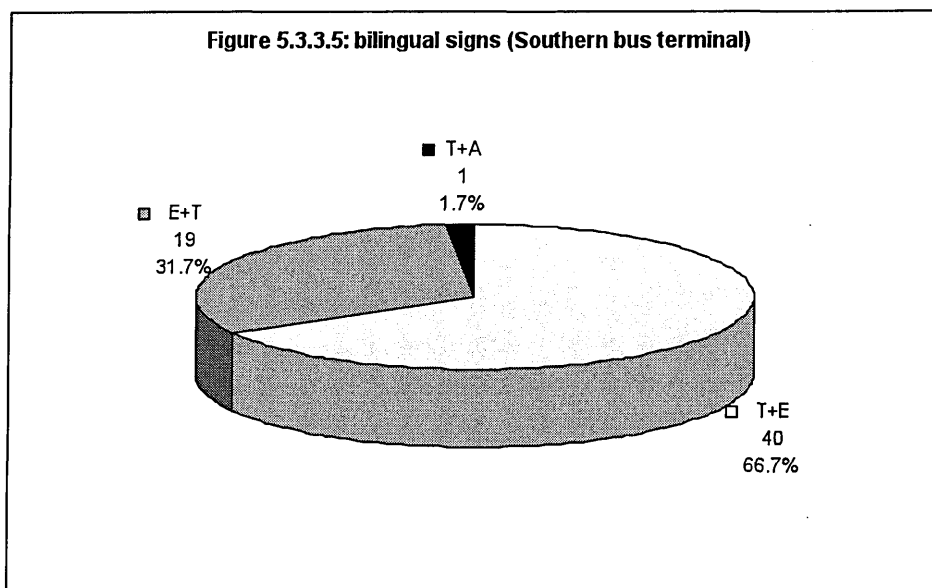


Figure 5.3.3.4 shows that there are only four monolingual English signs, one of which belongs to the bus terminal (see Figure 5.3.3.4.1).



Figure 5.3.3.4.1: a monolingual English official sign (Southern bus terminal)

This monolingual English official sign contains only the letter ‘M’. As the sign is found at the entrance of the bus terminal car park building, it can be assumed that ‘M’ is an abbreviation for ‘metres’ in English.



Regarding Figure 5.3.3.5, all bilingual signs include Thai as the main language. Mostly, the bilingual signs display both Thai and English messages. However, the group of bilingual Thai-English or Thai dominant signs is the largest. There is only one bilingual sign (1.7%) that contains another foreign language, Arabic (see Figure 5.3.3.5.1).



Figure 5.3.3.5.1: a bilingual Thai-Arabic sign (Southern bus terminal)

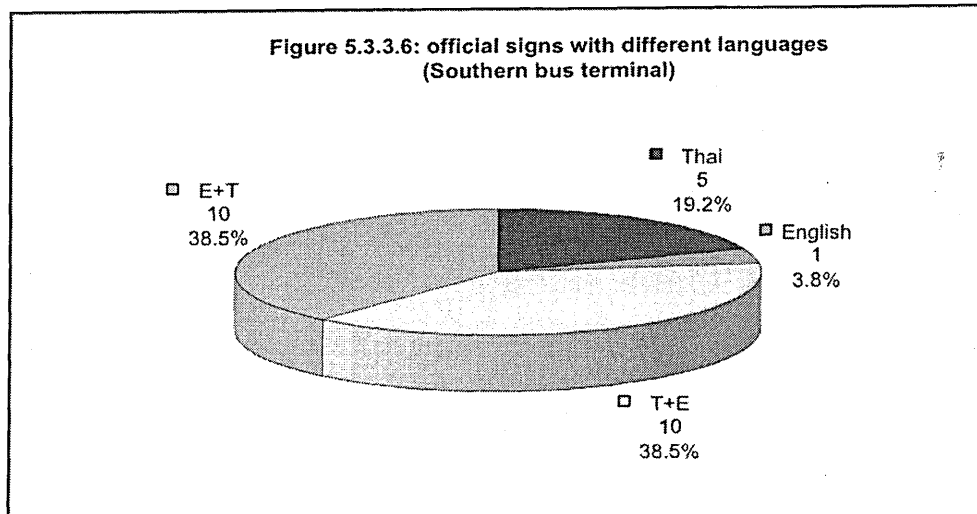


Figure 5.3.3.6 demonstrates that apart from English and Thai, there is no sign containing other foreign languages in the case of the official signs. In addition, there is no trilingual and multilingual official sign at all.

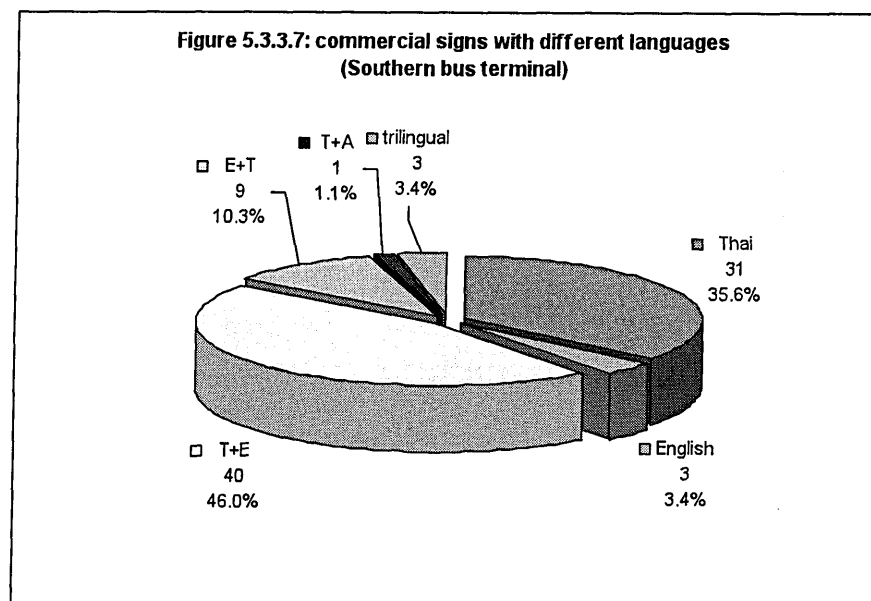


Figure 5.3.3.7 points out that there are more languages displayed on commercial signs than official signs. However, the number of Thai-English bilingual signs (46%) is the biggest group. There are 3 trilingual signs, two of which display Thai-English-Japanese (see Figure 5.3.3.7.1). The other displays Thai-English-Chinese. There is one bilingual Thai-Arabic sign (see Figure 5.3.3.5.1).



Figure 5.3.3.7.1: a trilingual (Thai, English, Japanese) sign (Southern bus terminal)

At Southern bus terminal, English is a dominant foreign language. This is same as it is at Suvarnabhumi airport and at Don Muang airport. However, the role of Thai signs is greater than the role of English signs. Based on Table 5.3.3, 99 signs contain Thai, while 66 signs display the English language. Although there are 59 bilingual signs that contain both Thai and English, the majority of the bilingual signs are Thai dominant. Some signs only have an icon in English, but all messages are in Thai (see Figure 5.3.3.8).



Figure 5.3.3.8: a bilingual Thai dominant sign: only logo in English (Southern bus terminal)

In addition, some signs combine the use of English or Roman script with Thai words or the use of codemixing (Thai-English in the same sentence) (see Figure 5.3.3.9). According to the data in this research, the language mixed signs are hardly found at both airports.

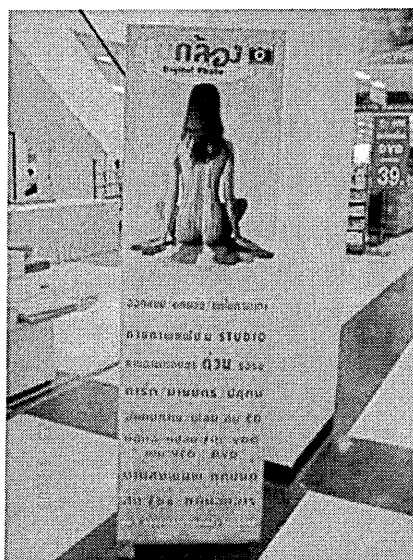


Figure 5.3.3.9: a bilingual Thai dominant sign: codemixing  
(Southern bus terminal)

It appears that, at Southern bus terminal, the presence of English on the signs is regarded as a symbol of modernity and fashion, as many shop are named in English or have a mixture of English on the signs. This can be linked with Kapper's (1992:5) article reporting that the appearance of English product label influences the attitude of consumers to buy the product. In this case, the shop owners might think that the presence of English on the shop signs may attract more customers to their shops. The other foreign languages found at this site are Japanese, Chinese and Arabic. However, their roles cannot compete with English.

Based on section 5.3.1, English plays a greater significant role than Thai at Suvarnabhumi airport, because it is an international airport and frequently visited by foreigners. Regarding section 5.3.2, at Don Muang airport, English plays a slightly greater role than Thai, because the airport is used for domestic flights and is occasionally visited by foreigners. From section 5.3.3, at Southern bus terminal which is hardly visited by

foreigners, Thai play a greater significant role than English. As regards the three data collection sites, English is a dominant foreign language at all sites. Although there are some signs containing other foreign languages, such as Chinese, Japanese and Arabic, these languages do not play any significant role on the signs. Based on the statistics and the information from section 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3, it can be concluded that English plays a dominant role as a foreign language in the linguistic landscape in major transport hubs in Thailand to various degrees depending on the numbers of foreign visitors at each data collection site. Regarding the statistical evidence in this section, the hypothesis that the presence of English on the signs is associated with the number of foreigners at each data collection site is justified.

This section has revealed the research results in numerical forms. The next section presents the linguistic landscape characteristics of Thai signs based on the results in section 5.2, section 5.3, and the literature about global English and linguistic landscape in combination with the employment of sociolinguistics and my social and cultural perspectives.

## **5.4 Data analysis**

The data analysis of the linguistic landscape characteristics of signs in major transport hubs in Thailand are made in relation to the research results in the previous section along with the ideas from the literature review chapter. A broadly sociolinguistic approach along with social and cultural perspectives is used as analytical frameworks. The main characteristics of linguistic landscape of Thai signs from a case study of major public transport hubs are as follows:



#### **5.4.1 The role of English as the de facto official second language on the signs**

According to the research results, English plays a significant role on Thai signs in main transport hubs in Thailand. English appears to be a dominant foreign language, as it is the most common language found at all sites. The roles of English compared with those of Thai at each data collection site are various depending on the number of foreign visitors. In addition to the hypothesis, it appears that the number of monolingual English signs at each location is consistent with the number of foreign visitors as well.

At Suvarnabhumi airport, English plays a more dominant role than Thai on signs, as it is the place, which is frequently visited by foreign tourists in comparison to Don Muang airport and Southern bus terminal. With regard to monolingual signs, the number of monolingual English signs is around 8 times (88.5%) higher than that of monolingual Thai signs (10.9%) at all sites. This finding supports Backhaus's (2007) statement that English plays a dominant role in the country, because it can reach wider groups of passengers than the official language, Thai. The statistics of monolingual signs at Don Muang airport and the bus terminal also prove that the statement is sound and reasonable. In the case of Don Muang airport, English seems to play a slightly bigger role than Thai, as evidenced by the numbers of 13 monolingual Thai signs and 17 English signs. This is presumed by the fact that the airport is used for domestic flights and only four local airlines operate at this airport. From the statistical flight report, the Airports of Thailand Public Company Limited (AOT) (2009: 42) reveals that in 2008, there were 255,118 flights flying to and from Suvarnabhumi airport and 55,317 flights departing and arriving at Don Muang airport. Hence, based on the information about airlines and flights, it may be assumed that the number of both Thai and foreign tourists who travel around the country should be less than the number of tourists who travel with international flights at Suvarnabhumi airport. While Southern bus terminal is quite far from the city centre, not many foreign tourists know

about it. Even among Thai people, travelling by bus seems less popular than travelling by plane because of the longer travelling time. It might be possible to assume that the signs at the site do not aim at international tourists.

#### 5.4.2 Language(s) displayed and the target audience

From a broadly sociolinguistic perspective, it might be possible to conclude that some monolingual signs or one language dominant signs are aimed at specific groups of target audience. For example, the sign for *tour service* in both airports are in English only (see Figure 5.4.2.1 and Figure 5.4.2.2), as Thai people normally do not buy a tour package or request any travel information at the airport. Therefore, the *tour service* signs should be aimed at foreigners rather than Thais.



Figure 5.4.2.1: a monolingual English sign: tour services center (Don Muang airport)



Figure 5.4.2.2: a monolingual English sign: tour service (Suvarnabhumi airport)

In the case of the two *VAT refund* signs at Suvarnabhumi airport, there is one sign that displays only in English (see Figure 5.4.2.3). The other sign shows English and Japanese messages (see Figure 5.3.1.6.1). It might be assumed that there are many Japanese tourists coming to visit Thailand. That is why the sign has a Japanese translation

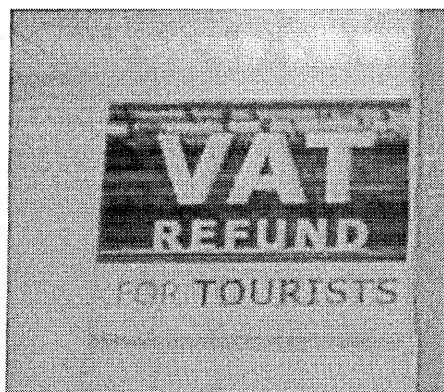


Figure 5.4.2.3: a monolingual English sign: VAT refund (Suvarnabhumi airport)

All signs at mobile service provider counters display only English monolingual signs or bilingual signs containing English (see Figure 5.4.2.4). In this case, it shows that English is used as a mean for wider communication. Since Thailand is visited by international tourists from different countries, it is not possible for the sign maker to provide information in every language. Therefore, English is chosen as a means to communicate with international visitors.



Figure 5.4.2.4: a monolingual English sign: phone rental (Suvarnabhumi airport)

Some monolingual Thai or Thai dominant signs seem to be designed for Thai audience only. For examples, Figure 5.4.2.5 and Figure 5.4.2.6 are intended to reach the Members

of Parliament and Thai government officers. Therefore, Thai is the dominant language on the signs.



Figure 5.4.2.5: a bilingual Thai dominant sign: 'for Members of Parliament'  
(Suvarnabhumi airport)



Figure 5.4.2.6: a bilingual Thai dominant sign: 'special check-in row for  
government officers' (Suvarnabhumi airport)

### 5.4.3 Language Priority

In terms of the sign layouts and language priority, bilingual signs that belong to the official group tend to give the priority to Thai. Mainly, Thai-English and Thai dominant signs at all data collection sites belong to the official group. The majority of the official signs give priority to the Thai language by placing the Thai message above the English message,

while the font sizes of the two languages are quite similar (see Figure 5.4.3.1, Figure 5.4.3.2 and Figure 5.4.3.3).



Figure 5.4.3.1: an official Thai-English sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)

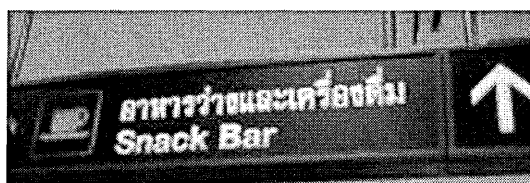


Figure 5.4.3.2: an official Thai-English sign (Don Muang airport)

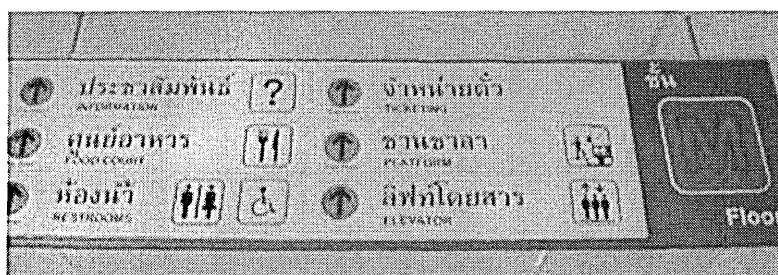


Figure 5.4.3.3: an official Thai-English sign (Southern bus terminal)

On the other hand, English-Thai or English dominant signs are found more often in the group of commercial signs. Commercial signs seem to give more priority to English by placing the English message above the Thai message. Frequently, the English font sizes are bigger than the Thai ones (see Figure 5.4.3.4 and Figure 5.4.3.5)



Figure 5.4.3.4: a commercial English dominant sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)

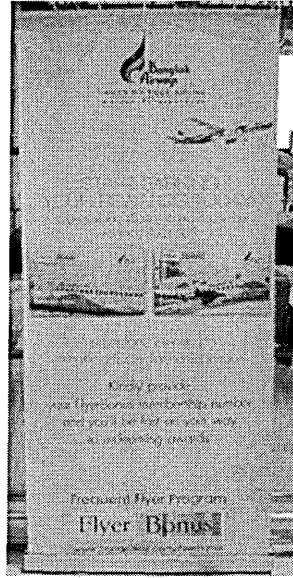


Figure 5.4.3.5: a commercial English-Thai sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)

#### 5.4.4 American English

According to the English displayed on the signs at all data collection sites, it might be concluded that English in the transport hubs is mainly American English. This can easily be noticed by looking at the orthography on the signs (see Figure 5.4.4.1) or the use of some American English vocabulary. For example, at the airport, the sign for the lift (in British English) appears as *elevator* which is an American English term (see Figure 5.4.4.2 and Figure 5.4.4.3). According to this limited data, it might be possible to deduce that American English is the dominant Standard English in Thailand.



Figure 5.4.4.1: an example of American English spellings (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Figure 5.4.4.2: an example of American word choices: elevator (Don Muang airport)



Figure 5.4.4.3: an example of American word choices: elevator (Suvarnabhumi airport)

### 5.4.5 The roles of other foreign languages on the signs

Regarding the roles of other foreign languages, Chinese is the second frequently found language on the signs after English at the two airports (see Figure 5.4.5.1). However, there is no bilingual sign containing Chinese found at Southern bus terminal.

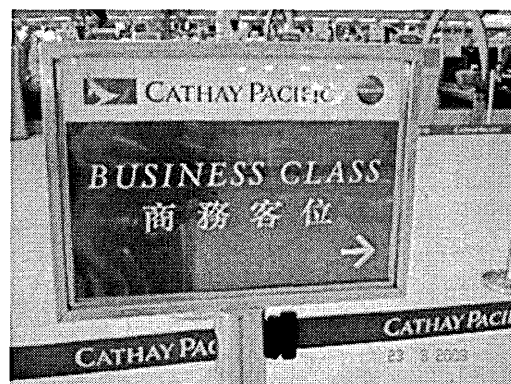


Figure 5.4.5.1: a bilingual English-Chinese sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)

Japanese (see Figure 5.3.1.5.2) and Arabic (see Figure 5.3.1.5.3) also play a role on the signs at the three data collection sites. There are also other foreign languages, such as French, German, Russian (see Figure 5.4.5.2), Korean (see Figure 5.4.5.3) and Turkish (see Figure 5.4.5.4). However, their roles are not prominent and the signs containing these foreign languages are found at Suvarnabhumi airport only.



Figure 5.4.5.2: a bilingual Russian-English sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)

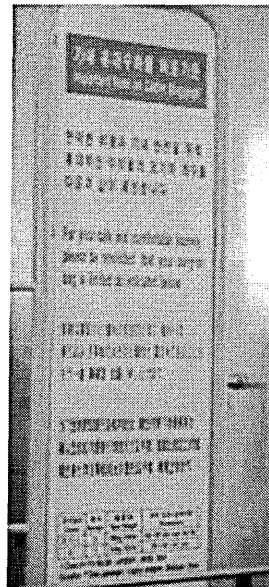


Figure 5.4.5.3: a bilingual Korean-English sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



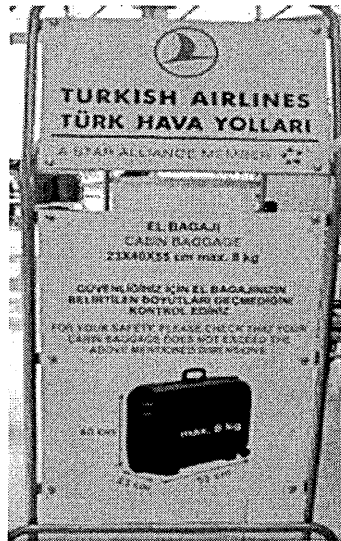


Figure 5.4.5.4: a bilingual English-Turkish sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)

#### 5.4.6 Social and cultural information from the signs

As Gorter (2006: 87) mentions, the study of linguistic landscape can also be revealing of the social and cultural contexts in which signs are placed. This statement is proven to be valid in this case. Some signs at the data collection sites reveal cultural information about the country and particular events or situations during the period of data collection.

For example, in terms of cultural information, Thai people are taught to pay respect to the elderly. Hence, in the toilets at all data collection sites, I found a special toilet with the bilingual Thai-English sign displaying the Thai word, **ผู้สูงอายุ**, and the English word, *elder*, at both airports. The same sign, however, displays only the Thai word, **ผู้สูงอายุ**, at the bus terminal (see Figure 5.4.6.1, Figure 5.4.6.2). At Don Muang airport, there is an area reserved for the elderly as well (see Figure 5.4.6.3).

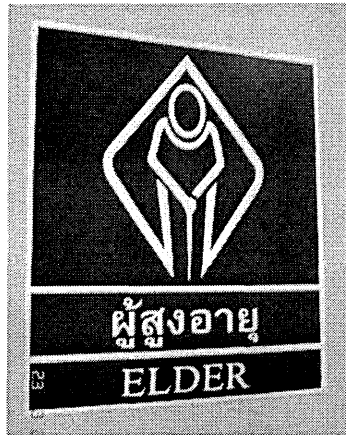


Figure 5.4.6.1: an 'elder' sign in front of the toilet (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Figure 5.4.6.2: an 'elder' sign in front of the toilet (Southern bus terminal)



Figure 5.4.6.3: a 'reserve for the elder' sign in a waiting area (Don Muang airport)

In addition, as Thailand is a Buddhist country, there are some signs telling the way to the monks' waiting room or waiting areas. Some foreigners might not understand why monks have to have separate waiting areas. This is because monks cannot have a body contact with any woman. The airports, therefore, provide waiting areas for them (see Figure 5.4.6.4 and Figure 5.4.6.5). However, this kind of sign is not found at the bus terminal. In

addition, a donation box requesting money for the building of a Buddhist pavilion is also found (see Figure 5.4.6.6). Thai people believe that after donating money to build a Buddhist pavilion, their lives might become better.



Figure 5.4.6.4: a 'for monks only' sign in a waiting area (Don Muang airport)



Figure 5.4.6.5: a 'waiting room for monks' sign (Suvarnabhumi airport)



Figure 5.4.6.6: a sign asking for a donation toward the building of a new Buddhist pavilion

Regarding special events, as the data were collected in March 2009, at Southern bus terminal, there was a sign giving details and prices of Songkarn T-shirts (see figure 5.4.6.7).

The reason why this sign was there is because on the 13<sup>th</sup> April of every year, Thailand celebrates the Thai New Year with the festival called 'Songkarn'. There are some particular types of clothes that people wear during the festival.



Figure 5.4.6.7: a sign giving the details of sizes and prices of Songkarn T-shirts  
(Southern bus terminal)

The data analysis as well as cultural information about the country derives from the perspective of a Thai researcher. Nevertheless, if the same data were analysed by a foreign researcher, this might lead to some different interesting perspectives from another angle, even though the same analytical approach is employed.

This chapter has documented the quantitative results along with qualitative data interpretation. The statistics report the numbers of signs in terms of 1) information vs. advertising, and 2) monolingual, bilingual, trilingual, and multilingual. The next chapter presents the findings from the research, suggestions for further research and the conclusion.

## **Chapter 6 Findings and conclusion**

The previous chapter has documented the results of the research and the characteristics of linguistic landscape in major transport hubs in Thailand. This chapter presents the findings from the research based on the information in Chapter 5 and Chapter 2. In addition, it provides suggestions for further research studies into linguistic landscape. In the last part, the conclusion of this research paper is provided.

### **6.1 Findings**

This section is based on the research results and data analysis in Chapter 5 along with the literature review about global English and linguistic landscape in Chapter 2. Findings are interpreted in relation to the research aims and objectives as well as the research questions and hypotheses.

First, in relation to the previous research studies, which generally conclude that English is used as the de facto second language for wider communication and has played a leading role as a foreign language in Thailand, the research results support the conclusions of those pieces of research. Based on Chapter 5, English plays an importantly communication role as a dominant foreign language and as a means for wider communication, because the more foreign visitors, the more frequently English signs are found. Based on the amounts of the signs, Table 5.3.1 shows that the role of English at Suvarnabhumi airport is greater than the role of Thai. Table 5.3.2 reveals that the role of English at Don Muang airport is relatively similar to the role of Thai. The role of English shown in Table 5.3.3 contrasts the roles of English at Suvarnabhumi airport and at Don Muang airport, because at Southern bus terminal, Thai plays a more significant role than English. In addition, the

numbers of monolingual English signs at each data collection site is also consistent with the numbers of foreign visitors. The more foreigners visit the site, the more monolingual English signs exist. Furthermore, at Suvarnabhumi airport, which is the most frequently visited by international visitors, commercial signs at this site display various foreign languages, such as Japanese, Arabic, and Chinese than commercial signs at Don Muang airport and Southern bus terminal. As a result, this might be concluded that the number of foreign tourists is associated with the use of a wider range of languages too.

Second, both official and commercial signs at the airports and the bus terminal give priority to the informative purpose of the signs rather than advertising purpose. In terms of languages displayed, bilingual Thai-and-English signs are the most frequently found.

Third, most of the official signs are informative and display mainly two languages- Thai and English. This can be clearly seen from the case of the official signs at Southern bus terminal, where 100% of the official signs are informative and display only Thai and English languages. This finding supports Smalley's (1994: 25) statement that 'Thailand as a nation has two languages, Standard Thai and Standard English'. Regarding Standard English, American English appears to be widely used on the signs more than British English.

Fourth, the majority of the signs for advertising belong to the commercial group. This statement can be supported by the evidence at Southern bus terminal, because all of the advertising signs belong to the commercial group. As signs are used as part of marketing strategies to attract customers, signs that belong to the commercial group generally display a variety of languages more than signs owned by the airports and the bus terminal.

Fifth, apart from English, other foreign languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, French and German, are mostly found at Suvarnabhumi airport than any other data collection site, as it is an international airport and frequently visited by foreigners. However, the roles of other foreign languages do not play a significant role on the signs and cannot compete with the role of English. The signs with various languages usually belong to the commercial group. These signs mainly belong to foreign airlines that the headquarters are in other countries. Therefore, the signs display mainly the national language of the country where the airlines belong to and English or Thai or both.

Sixth, the study of linguistic landscape in Thailand reveals some social and cultural information of Thai society, such as the information about the dominant religion and an important event.

This section presents the six main findings from the research. The next section suggests some ideas for further research studies.

## **6.2 Suggestions for further research**

In doing research on linguistic landscape, from the same set of data, it is possible that the data analyses can be done in different ways depending on the employment of methods, analytical approaches, research focuses including aims and objectives of the research. As Ben-Rafael *et al.* (2006: 10) states, ‘the same signs may be variously attractive to different people.’

During this research project, I found that there are also other interesting topics to be studied, for example, the use of loan words on the signs (see Figure 6.2.1), the symbolic

meanings of the signs (see Figure 6.2.2), and the use of pictures and decorations on the signs (see Figure 6.2.3).



Figure 6.2.1: an example of a sign with loan words (Southern bus terminal)

The loan word, **บุฟเฟต์**, in the circle comes from the word *buffet*. In Thai language, there are many loan words from foreign languages especially English and French. Some of them are used differently from the original meanings in the Thai contexts. For example, the word *café* (**คาเฟ่**) refers to a restaurant that provides alcoholic drinks and live comedy shows on stage.



Figure 6.2.2: an example of a sign with symbolic meanings (Suvarnabhumi airport)

The use of a symbol in one country might mean differently in another country or other countries. In the same way, different countries might choose different symbols to represent the same message.





Figure 6.2.3: an example of a sign with pictures and decorations

(Southern bus terminal)

The shop name is *Phichit Silver Gold*. *Phichit* (**พิจิตร**) is a Thai province that has a crocodile as a province symbol. That is why the sign shows the photos of a crocodile at each side. This can also be taken as an example of a sign that reveals some social and cultural information of the country, as there is folklore about a crocodile that could transform himself into a human being and fell in love with a lady living in a village in Phichit. The love story between the crocodile and the lady led to the use of crocodile as a province symbol. Folklores around the country have a link with the local people's beliefs and province symbols in many areas.

Further studies can also use multidisciplinary approaches from linguistic, sociolinguistic and multimodal perspectives (Gorter, 2006: 87). They can also be done in combination with sociology, social geography, cognitive science and the study of the individual language itself or the combined perspectives for a better understanding of the linguistic landscape (Gorter, 2006: 88). In addition, researchers can do ethnographic research by means of a participant observation by looking at the reaction of people when seeing the signs and interview them for their opinions on a particular sign.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The research into linguistic landscape: a case study of signs in major transports hubs in Thailand focuses on the role of English on Thai signs through the study of signs at Suvarnabhumi airport in Samut Prakarn, Don Muang airport and Southern bus terminal in Bangkok. The 401 photos were collected from the country's main airport, 102 photos from Don Muang airport and 103 photos from Southern bus terminal. There are 606 photos in total. The research results reveal that in the case of official signs, English plays a role as the de facto official language, as it is the language that is the most frequently found on the official signs apart from Thai. In addition, bilingual official and commercial Thai-English/English-Thai signs are the most commonly found in all data collection sites. In terms of commercial signs, English plays a leading role as a dominant foreign language and a means for wider communication. Although other foreign languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and French are present on the signs, their roles are not significant and cannot compete with English. The results of this research project also support the preceding literature regarding English in Thailand that English plays a leading role as a foreign language in the country. The research also suggests that American English is used as Standard English on signs in the three major transport hubs.

The presence of English on the signs and the numbers of monolingual English signs are associated with the numbers of foreign visitors. The more foreign tourists visit the place, the more English or English dominant signs are displayed. English signs are found more at Suvarnabhumi airport than Don Muang airport and Southern bus terminal, because it is the place that is the most frequently visited by foreigners. Mainly, the official signs or the signs owned by the airports and the bus terminal are used for giving information, and they display mainly two languages - Thai and English. Mostly, in this research, advertising signs belong to the commercial group and display more foreign languages than informative

signs in order to reach wider groups of customers. By looking at the signs of a particular country, it is also possible that the signs can reveal some cultural information and the particular events happening during particular periods of time.

On the basis of the findings in this research project alone, it is, however, difficult to draw any general conclusion about signs in public transport hubs in Thailand or about Thai signs in general or even airport signs in Thailand, as there are 4 more airports in Phuket, Chiangmai, Hat Yai and Chiangrai and more main bus terminals that I did not visit. If I had collected the data from these four airports and the other bus terminals, it might have been possible that the results and the analysis may have differed.

In this research, there are still gaps that allow further research to be done by using different disciplines and perspectives, especially by Thai or foreign scholars who have not been brought up in the context. It would be interesting to see whether different backgrounds, disciplines and perspectives would lead to different data interpretation and findings or not.

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